Marvel's Secret War And The DC Challenge

COMICS FEATURE

48432
MARCH
$2.95
$3.50
CANADA
UK-£1 75 DGS

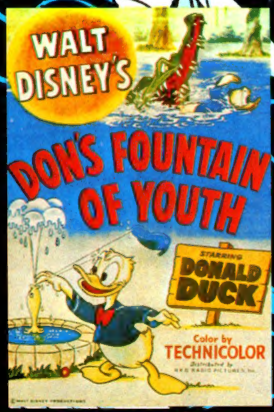
A Talk With The Uncanny
Chris Claremont

Marv Wolfman
Speaks Out About
Comics, Art And Life

Ron Goulart
Looks Back At
The Golden Age
A Flash Hero History

Superhero Role-Playing Games
Beginning Collector's Corner
Exclusive Comic Consumer's Guide

Max Allan Collins
Begins Strip Search With A Look At
Dick Tracy



The Animated Antics Of
Donald Duck

Star Trek At DC

COMICS FEATURE

THE MAGAZINE THE PROFESSIONALS READ AND TRUST

COMICS FEATURE:
Is the leading magazine devoted to comic books. Every month Comics Feature brings you the latest news, the most insightful columns and the most revealing interviews from the world of comic books, comic strips, animation and art. From the bountiful archives of yesteryear come articles on classic comic strips and the comic books of the Golden Age; from the present come looks at and talks with the most important men and women in the industry; and from the misty realm of tomorrow come speculative columns, insightful predictions and revealing previews of the comics of the future.

INTERVIEWS:
Artists, writers and editors...the men and women who make the industry reveal their concepts of storytelling... their formative years...their plans for the future...how they view life...and what they want and expect from their own work.

Only in **Comics Feature** does Jim Starlin talk about his years in Viet Nam and his early religious schooling—and how they control his writing today. Only in **Comics Feature** does Jim Shooter talk about his early family life and the economic pressures that led to his life in the comics field—and his position as head of the largest publisher of comic books.

Comics Feature is the magazine the professionals trust to treat them fairly and with which they let down their hair and chat about the most important and the most intimate of their feelings and their influences, their hopes and their dreams.

COLUMNS:
Max Allan Collins, author of numerous mystery novels the Dick Tracy newspaper strip and Eclipse's **Ms Tree**, looks at the colorful and exciting history of the comic strip; **Ron Goulart**, author of over 27 books, writer for such publications as Penthouse and popular cultural historian, overviews the fantastic roots of comic books in the spectacular years of the Golden Age;
James Van Hise, founding editor of **Enterprise Incidents**, contributor to Cinefantastique and Comics Scene and author of The Art of Al Williamson, presents the frenetic realm of animation and observes the heroes of our four-color fantasies;
Plus **Sam Kujava's Notes, T.J. Pavor's Collector's Corner, Dan Baker's Games** and **Steve Bissette's Books.**

NEWS:
Feature News presents the latest events in the world of comic books, newspaper strips and animation...who is hired, fired and promoted...what new projects are planned and by whom...what planned projects are cancelled and why.
Spotlight highlights one of the major books making a splash within the direct market and demonstrates why people are finding it exciting and innovative.
Preview gives an advance look at a brand new title and talks with the proud parents, the writer, artist and editor that have brought life to the spanking new idea.
Finally **Publisher Pick's** points out a few of the more interesting books that have come out and briefly tells you why you may find them worth looking at.

THE CONSUMERS GUIDE TO COMIC BOOKS:
A complete checklist of all of the many books coming out from the numerous publishers, including a rundown of who the creative staff will be and what the major theme of the story will contain, along with a scorebox. And all brought to you before the first book listed has felt printer's ink.

COMICS FEATURE:
You can't afford to miss it. Exciting, colorful, informative, a must.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Send $19.95 for 9 issues to COMICS FEATURE/NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.,
1518 E. FOWLER AVE.
TAMPA, FL 33612

PLEASE SEND ME 9 ISSUES FOR ONLY $19.95
COMIC FEATURES

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

NMP

COMICS FEATURE

Number 28
March

columns

Strip Search
Dick Tracy leads off a new column on comic strips.
By Max Allen Collins
14

Games
Expanding the Hero Role-playing Games with new characters.
By Daniel W. Baker
31

Heroes
James Van Hise catches the fastest man alive...The Flash.
33

Looking Back On The Golden Age
Quality Comics Part 2
By Ron Goulart
38

Animated Antics
Donald, the world's best known duck.
By James Van Hise
52

Notes
Batman: The Hero and The Fraud
By Sam Kujava
55

Collector's Corner
Information and advice on collecting comics.
By T. I. Pavaro
58

FEATURES

Wolfman Part I

In this interview Marv Wolfman talks about his early development as a writer, his approach to comics story-telling and many of the things which help to establish his work as something special.
19

The Uncanny Claremont

It's hard to believe! About a decade ago the New X-Men were introduced to the world, they climbed to the top of the charts, becoming the most popular comic book characters on the market. Through the years its creative team has successfully endeavored to maintain the X-Men's claim to "Number One". Part of that creative team is Chris Claremont whose talents are as formidable as the characters he writes about. Rarely interviewed, Claremont here reveals much about himself and his work.
43

On The Cover:
The X-Men, drawn by Paul Smith. This piece was originally planned to be the cover of **X-Men #169** and with the kind **permission and cooperation** of Marvel Comics and Paul Smith, it appears here for the first time. Dick Tracy, the world's best known detective, was drawn by the late Rick Fletcher, and supplied to us by Max Allen Collins, whose column on comic strips begins this issue. Walt Disney's web-footed wonder, Donald Duck, is the main topic of this month's Animated Antics. The X-Men copyrighted by Marvel Comics. Dick Tracy copyrighted by Tribune News Syndicate, Inc. Donald Duck copyrighted by Walt Disney. Star Trek copyrighted Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved.

departments

Editorial
4

News
5

Preview
9

Comic Consumers' Guide
12

Publishers' Picks
67

staff

Hal Schuster
Publisher

Robert Lewis
Editor
Production Manager/Art Director

James Van Hise
Contributing Editor

Angela Hollenbeck
Asst. Art Director

David Burnside
David Carmichael
Production Assistants

Vicki Hollenbeck
Cynthia Broadwater
Typesetter

Jack Schuster
President

For advertising information:
Jack Schuster (813) 977-2070

EDITORIAL

By Hal Schuster

Comic books can be a medium of ideas as easily, and certainly more graphically, than many other forms of communication. They combine the ability to transmit visuals with the permanence of print into a result which no other form can match. Sometimes, though, the very subtlety of the concept escapes the conscious thought of the reader...particularly after long periods of exposure. Even the writers and the artists involved in creating the stories printed in the books fail to realize the message which they are postulating. And because of their failure often the content of the individual book fails to harmonize with the underlying conception of the title and/or the character. It is then that we realize that something is wrong although it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what the irritation is.

Underlying most comic book characters is a basic understanding for the need of a system of laws and a respect for authority. Even when a character is on the outs with his local police, it is normally due either to an unfortunate misunderstanding or the ineptitude of some local official...and never a problem inherent in the system.

Virtually all books portray the eternal conflict between good and evil and the ultimate eventual triumph of good and defeat of evil. Even though some good people may be hurt in the struggle, the final result is always the death or incarceration of the villain and the glory of the hero who defeats him.

Patriotism and a love of country are strongly supported by the types of characters portrayed, including both those who operate under clear government charter such as the Avengers and those whose patriotism is written into their very fabric or name, such as with Captain America or the Justice League of America.

Fair play, honesty, good humor, sportsmanship and various other commonly accepted virtues are strongly advocated by the denizens of our four color page. Superman would no sooner attack a foe from behind than Thor would think to lie.

Perhaps one of the strangest oversights in comic books is the way in which the family is portrayed. Although Superboy's relationship with Ma and Pa Kent is both satisfactory and traditional, most other comic book relationships are either transitory or unfulfilled. Most often the love interest pursues the hero fruitlessly for decades When a courtship culminates in marriage it is most common for the match to end in the violent death of a spouse. Even parent child relationships are normally either estranged or ignored. Other than to portray the very violent life which a superhero must lead, and there certainly are other nonpermanent ways of doing this, there seems little reason for this seeming myopia. Hopefully the very recent trend towards more stable marriages will change this.

All of these very wholesome, exceedingly decent beliefs underlie our comic books even if not every author is capable of properly portraying them. Even the worst abusers do still find some of these ideas working their way into the final product. And the best users of the medium can literally make the concepts sing. The next time someone tells you that comic books are not valuable or have no redeeming social virtue or are not good for young children, challenge them to name another medium which regularly offers such value.

Comics Feature is published bi-monthly by New Media Publishing, Inc., 1518 East Fowler Avenue, Tampa, Florida 33612. *Comics Feature* is a trademark of New Media Publishing, Inc. This issue number 29, March-April 1984 content is copyright 1983 by New Media Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprint or reproduction in part or in whole without written permission is strictly forbidden. *Comics Feature* accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photos, art or other materials, but if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope, they will be seriously considered and, if necessary, returned. Products advertised are not necessarily endorsed by *Comics Feature* and any views expressed in editorial copy are not necessarily those of *Comics Feature*. Subscription rates $29.95 for twelve (12) issues in the United States and Canada, $34.95 foreign in U.S. funds only. Printed in U.S.A.

FEATURE NEWS

MARVEL'S SECRET WAR

What battle pits Spider-Man, Hulk, Mister Fantastic, The Human Torch, The Thing, Captain America, Thor, She-Hulk, Wasp, Captain Marvel, Iron Man, Hawkeye, Nightcrawler, Colossus, Cyclops, Professor Charles Xavier, Storm, Wolverine, Rogue, Lockheed the Dragon, Spider-Woman against Doctor Doom, Galactus, Kang, Doctor Octopus, Magneto, Ultron, Titanium Man, The Lizard, The Wrecker, Thunderball, Piledriver, Bulldozer, The Enchantress, Absorbing Man, Volcana, Klaw and the Molecule Man? Answer: The Beyonder.

Marvel Superheroes: The Secret Wars is perhaps the most important series that Marvel Comics has ever produced. Editor Tom DeFalco and writer Jim Shooter plan to produce a twelve-part series, following on the heels of **The Marvel Universe** series, which will make fans sit up and take notice. And which will force any follower of the Marvel Universe to purchase it since virtually every major character will experience changes which will affect their own books. Events in the maxi-series will result in a new costume for Spider-Man, the temporary disappearance of The Thing from the Fantastic Four and the handicapping of The Hulk among other equally important manifestations in the lives of everyone involved ranging from Captain America to the X-Men.

The Beyonder is a character far beyond the capabilities of any force yet seen in the Marvel Universe, dwarfing that of Galactus, Odin and The Watcher. The storyline is the most complex and all encompassing that the company has yet tried and the writer is the Editor-In-Chief of the company. Obviously Marvel Comics is putting a major effort behind this book. This is further evi-

TWO BIG NEW SERIES IN 1984

denced by a myriad of tie-in sales planned for the series. These will include other related publications, a line of toys and games and an animated series. Whether Marvel will be able to pull off this storyline in a way that does not disappoint expectations remains to be seen.

THE DC CHALLENGE

The **DC Challenge** is a new maxi-series planned by DC. Conceived by Mark Evanier it was presented to Dick Giordano at San Diego Con where it was virtually immediately approved. The concept is in effect a round-robbin of comic book artists and writers with different creators handling different sections and no real direction or conclusion in mind at the start. Each team of creators establishes the situation for the next who must write their way out of whatever corner they find themselves in. While this is not a new concept in other types of writing, especially in mystery writing, it is new to comic books. Each book will end in a cliff-hanger which will be resolved in the next part of the twelve-part series which will in turn establish the next cliff-hanger. The only continuing thread will be inker Dick Giordano.

The teams creating each issue, after being selected by lot, are as follows: on Book One, Mark Evanier and Gene Colon; Book Two, Len Wein and Chuck Patton; Book Three, Doug Moench and Carmine Infantino; Book Four, Elliot Maggin and Gil Kane; Book Five, Mike Barr and Keith Pollard; Book Six, Roy Thomas and Joe Kubert; Book Seven, Cary Bates and Ross Andru; Book Eight, Gerry Conway and Don Heck; Book Nine, Paul Kupperberg and Keith Giffen; Book Ten, Marv Wolfman and Keith Giffen; Book Eleven, Dan Mishkin and Curt Swan; and Book Twelve, all eleven writers and George Perez.

The book will be issued in regular newstand format. As Evanier commented, "If this thing goes too far we could accidentally wipe out the entire JLA, New Teen Titans, All Star Squadron, Legion of Super-Heroes, and Mormon Tabernacle Choir."

Four Epics, Four Graphic Novels and a Mini-Series From Marvel

Crash Ryan, Sisterhood of Steel, Time Spirits and **Void Indigo** are four new titles announced from Marvel's Epic Comics line. The four books will triple the output of the division's releases, added to **Coyote** and **Dreadstar.** Although not all details are finalized the announcement for 1984 publication is official. Release is planned by mid—Summer for all four books.

Crash Ryan is by newcomer Ron Harris. It concerns the adventures of young barn-stormer Ryan who loses a promising career flying passenger planes when a fatal miscalculation results in the destruction of his plane, twelve passengers, his flying license and his self-respect. Set in 1935, Ryan must learn to once again take responsibility for the lives of others when he is forced to join the United Airmen's struggle against The Doom. Only Crash Ryan can stop this modern Attila from laying waste to the world.

Sisterhood of Steel follows the story of Boronwe, a warrior-woman who has spent her entire life as a member of the Sisterhood of Steel. The Sisterhood is a military organization consisting entirely of women, based on an island where the Sisters are raised and trained in the arts of weaponry, strategy and warfare. Christy Marx writes and Mike Vosburg draws this series which oddly echoes the tales of Wonder Woman of Amazon Island.

Steve Perry and Tom Yeates have created a new series, **Time Spirits**, which follows the tale of Doot and the Sherman, Cusick the Tuscarora. Cusick is an old Indian who dresses eccentrically, in a hodgepodge of clothing from any number of different eras and cultures. The clothing only becomes understandable when we discover that he has a magic potion that enables him to step between the planes of time and reach any culture in any era.

Yet another time-spanning series is **Void Indigo**, the creation of Steve Gerber and Val Mayerik. The epic struggle between the aggressive, evil Dark Lords and the great barbarian chieftain, Ath'agaar, is the central theme of the series. "The Hindu doctrine of reincarnation holds that the soul of a human being returns to earth again and again... The soul may be reborn as another human, a plant, an animal, a bird, an insect—but in each incarnation its essential character remains the same. Our series takes that doctrine several light years farther, to assert that the soul is not earthbound. Its voyages from one corporeal form to another might span interstellar distances. Thus a human being might very well be reincarnated as an alien...Every act of spirit is done. forever. An evil committed in one lifetime may exact its price a thousand lifetimes later. An oath of vengeance, sworn in antiquity, may live on in the realm of the spirit—the Void Indigo—through countless millennia, until the vengeful soul and its timeless enemy meet to do battle again."

Heartburst is the latest graphic novel announced by Marvel. According to Jo Duffy, the project's Associate Editor, "**Heartburst** is a science fiction romance. The setting is in a faraway, future world which has been colonized by Earthlings. The colonists have completely oppressed the native, humanoid population. The religion, morality and culture of the settlers from Earth has been shaped by 1950s television broadcasts which have traveled through space and are being received on the world. (The hero) Sunoco Firestone is a young man who learns a lot about himself and his society. He does a lot of growing up in the story. The man he is at the beginning of the novel is not the man he is at its end." The book is written, drawn, inked and colored by Rick Veitch. Marvel Comics has also reannounced the imminent release of **Superboxers**, by John Byrne and Ron Wilson, **Dazzler The Movie** and Dave Cockrum's **Futurions**.

Television's **A-Team** will appear in a three part series from Marvel Comics. The comic book will appear in regular format and be written by Jim Salicrup, drawn by Marie Severin and inked by Chic Stone.

Games And Prices At Marvel Comics

According to **International Correspondence** Marvel Comics may decide to forgo the planned price increase which was scheduled to take effect with April, 1984 shipping groups. "Marvel seems to believe that the current 25% price differential between their books and DC's is hurting DC's sales considerably, and helping Marvel's. Therefore, by delaying an increase, or by increasing only five cents, with no change in paper stock, they believe they can improve their competitive position even more."

Also reported was the closing of negotiations between TSR, manufacturers of the very popular **Dungeons and Dragons** role-playing games, and Marvel Comics. TSR has been

licensed to produce Adventure Games based on Marvel characters. Captain America and Captain Marvel will lead off the series. It should be noted that **Champions, Villains and Vigilantes, Superworld** and other such games have laid the groundwork for this type of merchandise but do not have any tie-ins with actual comic book characters.

The Legend of the Last Son of Krypton

Superman #400 will celebrate the 45th Anniversary of the magazine with a special-sized 64 page issue and a specially painted cover by Howard Chaykin.

Writer Elliot Maggin will examine the legend of Superman by focusing on how future times will view the hero. Artistically, according to editor Julius Schwartz, "We plan to use the Anniversary format for a number of artists to give a number of interpretations of who this almost mythical character is. Right now Joe Orlando and Frank Miller are lined up, and I'm talking to other artists who have never drawn a Superman story about doing the remaining chapters, or, at the very least, a salute to Superman pin-up page."

The only question remaining in this writer's mind is why it is deemed necessary by DC Comics to utilize artists who "have never drawn a Superman story" to celebrate the longevity and popularity of the book.

Archie Threatens Kitchen Sink

The publication of **Goodman Beaver**, a collection of stories that originally appeared in **Help**, a short-lived magazine of the early '60s, and due to be published by Kitchen Sink Press, has been delayed due to threats of suit issued by Archie Comics. It seems that the publisher of teen humor comics objects to Harvey Kurtzman and Will Elder portraying their company namesake as someone possessed of a licentious, **Playboy**-inspired lifestyle. This same objection was issued when the material

first appeared at which time the creators assured the company that no republication would take place and that no similar material would be produced.

When the creators redid the artwork and changed the names and republished the material as part of the **Executive's Comic Book** in 1982 this resulted in an out-of-court settlement of $1,000 at which time Archie also secured the copyright and original art from the work, and a new promise that the work would not appear again.

When Kitchen Sink contacted Archie about reprinting the story as part of the anthology collection Archie refused permission. When Kitchen Sink then planned to issue the book anyway, with the story photoreduced to appear at one-quarter size, Archie threatened an injunction.

Kitchen Sink has announced that a one month delay will be necessary for making necessary changes in the book.

Follow-Up on DC

Third quarter news for DC parent corporation, Warner Communications, was just as bleak as that for the first two quarters as the financial posture of the company suffered further reverses. DC Comics has continued to experience further product delays.

"Hurt by fierce price cutting in video games sold by its Atari unit, Warner Communications took a staggering $122.4 million loss and laid off 30% of its white-collar workers. Warner stock, as high as $59 last December before Atari's problems began to surface, was recently selling at $22."
—from **Fortune,** November 14, 1983

CHICAGO COMIC STRIP GOES NATIONAL

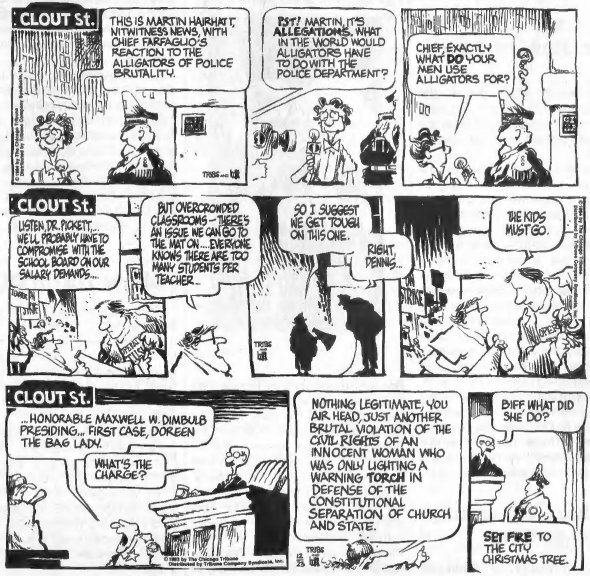
"Politics," wrote Sidney Hillman, "is the science of who gets what when and why." Welcome to Clout Street.

Don Michel, Vice President of Tribune Company Syndicate, Inc., announced the national launch of the comic strip **Clout Street,** set for December 12.

Clout Street was developed by, and first ran in the Chicago Tribune in February of this year. The strips are signed by Tribs and Locher, a device that hints at the contributors who include Jim Squires, editor of the Chicago Tribune, Dick Ciccone, Managing Editor, and Dick Locher, Tribune staff cartoonist and 1983 Pulitzer winner.

Readers may find that the characters of **Clout Street** are not all together unfamiliar, as the strip takes an hilarious look at hometown bureaucrats. And, from time to time, we may all discover our favorite local politician, immortalized in the pages of this comic strip. From the mayor who's motto is "If you can't be a chameleon, be invisible", to the ambitious Police Chief with his eyes on crime and his mind on the mayor's job; the bumbling newscaster; the stay-hostile union leader; the untiring Protester, forever vying for the last word; and all the other participants in the daily tug-of-war of local politics.

With the level of talent contributing on this well-crafted strip, **Clout Street** may do for local politics what few other strips have been able to do for national politics. All this and humor too.


CLOUT St.
THIS IS MARTIN HAIRHAT, NITWITNESS NEWS, WITH CHIEF FARFAGLIO'S REACTION TO THE ALLIGATORS OF POLICE BRUTALITY.
PSST! MARTIN, IT'S ALLEGATIONS. WHAT IN THE WORLD WOULD ALLIGATORS HAVE TO DO WITH THE POLICE DEPARTMENT?
CHIEF, EXACTLY WHAT DO YOUR MEN USE ALLIGATORS FOR?
CLOUT St.
LISTEN DR. PICKETT... WE'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO COMPROMISE WITH THE SCHOOL BOARD ON OUR SALARY DEMANDS...
BUT OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS -- THERE'S AN ISSUE WE CAN GO TO THE WAT ON... EVERYONE KNOWS THERE ARE TOO MANY STUDENTS PER TEACHER...
SO I SUGGEST WE GET TOUGH ON THIS ONE.
RIGHT, DENNIS..
THE KIDS MUST GO.
CLOUT St.
...HONORABLE MAXWELL W. DIMBULB PRESIDING... FIRST CASE, DOREEN THE BAG LADY.
WHAT'S THE CHARGE?
NOTHING LEGITIMATE, YOU AIR HEAD, JUST ANOTHER BRUTAL VIOLATION OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF AN INNOCENT WOMAN WHO WAS ONLY LIGHTING A WARNING TORCH IN DEFENSE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE.
BIFF WHAT DID SHE DO?
SET FIRE TO THE CITY CHRISTMAS TREE.

PREVIEW

STAR TREK RETURNS TO COMICS

An Interview with Marv Wolfman and Mike Barr about DC's latest SF Comic

CF: You're working on the DC Star Trek *comic now and previously you had been associated with the Marvel* Star Trek, *correct?*

WOLFMAN: I wrote and edited the first several issues of the Marvel **Star Trek.** I did the film adaptation and half of a regular **Star Trek** story. So I come knowing the pitfalls of how not to do **Star Trek** any more.

One of the things I wanted to do when I convinced D.C. to do the **Star Trek** comic was to avoid all the pitfalls that I and the other writers made at Marvel.

CF: Were the pitfalls you made at Marvel your fault, or the fault of restrictions imposed by the Marvel contract as opposed to the present D.C. contract to adapt Star Trek.*?*

WOLFMAN: No, Paramount is fine. I have no problems with Paramount at all. They've been cooperative and our contract does allow us to use characters from the TV series, if we pay an additional fee, of course, due to the Writer's Guild restrictions involved with television and movie scripts. The Marvel problem was deadlines. I had to write the entire adaptation of **Star Trek: The Motion Picture,** which was 64 pages, in less than a month. And that was without knowing a lot of what was going on inside it because the first movie was so late in the working that we flew out to Doug Trumbull's and John Dykstra's studios in August and they had yet to design half the major things which would be in the movie which was being released in December. Also, Marvel's deadlines were ridiculously tight because of the release dates. Dave Cockrum had to draw faster than I think he's ever had to draw in his life, and I had to write it faster. But while I was doing that in one month's time, Archie Goodwin had five or six months to put together **The Empire Strikes Back,** which I envied him at the time.

D.C. and Paramount, however, worked out their agreements before we had to do everything. Paramount got us hundreds of stills and we don't have to rush the book out. In fact, we just took it off the schedule by two months so that we can get a backlog of a couple issues in the drawer before we even go out there.

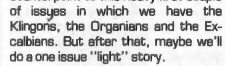
So deadlines was the first problem with the Marvel **Star Trek,** and secondly was that we all felt we had to religiously adapt the four act format of **Star Trek** and we ignored the constraints of comic books. We ignored the power that a comic book could have.

As editor, what I wanted on the new version of the comic book is to use the universe, use the characters, be absolutely religious about making certain that we do not violate anything of the **Star Trek** canon, and yet do it as a comic book. So we have continued stories, we have a soap opera feel to some of it in that we've introduced new characters who will have problems. We're introducing nice concepts that we can build upon the way comic books do. I've asked the artist to open up the pages so that there aren't 32 panels a page in order to get this incredibly tight storyline, and by expanding the storyline and by playing out the characters more we can do a tight plot over four issues instead of a tight plot with no characterization in one issue. Thus we can have very strong characterizations, more space for the artwork so that it doesn't look claustrophobic like I think a lot of the stuff at Marvel did, and since I worked on it at Marvel I'm disparaging my stuff as well. At Marvel we did too many panels and tried to do just an impossible job for a comic book and with the D.C. version we're pacing it a little bit better and I'm very, very pleased with the material.

CF: Are you considering doing character vignettes in the book such as you did in Teen Titans *#8?*

WOLFMAN: We are working on spending a lot of time on characters as opposed to worrying about whether the Enterprise is going to face the Klingons in issue twenty-three. If we want to do a character issue, that's fine and it's up to Mike Barr, the writer. If he just wants to do one that is not a strong **Star Trek** plot, like "Shore Leave". Now essen-

tially that's character stuff. There's a plot there, but you learn about the characters and how they relate in different ways. Sure, if Mike wants to write one of those, that's great. I'm not insisting that there be the heavy Trek plots. In fact, I've asked Mike to do a humorous **Star Trek** story, since they did several on the series, as a counterpoint to this heavy first couple of issues in which we have the Klingons, the Organians and the Excalbians. But after that, maybe we'll do a one issue "light" story.



CF: How many issues are you going to have prior to the adaptation of Star Trek III*?*

WOLFMAN: That all depends on when the film is actually coming out and if they want us to start an adaptation in print before the film comes out, or after. Some studios like two issues of a five issue adaptation coming out before the film to wet people's appetites, such as George Lucas did on the first **Star Wars**, but which some studios, like Lucasfilm, didn't want done on **Jedi.** So it's up to Paramount.

CF: Are the first stories in the comic book going to be a buildup to the movie?

WOLFMAN: No, but they do all take place after **Star Trek II**, and whether they're considered as taking place before the third movie depends on what they do with the third movie.

CF: I don't think that it's any big insight to assume that Spock is going to be revived in the third film.

WOLFMAN: There's no way of knowing. I have no inside knowledge on this because we haven't spoken

with Paramount about the third movie, but according to the trades, Leonard Nimoy is only signed on as a director, not as an actor. Now they may be playing this just for the audience....

CF: The studios use the trades for their own purposes too.

WOLFMAN: Of course they do, but my point is that no one knows.

CF: So basically you're going to try to bring a different slant to the D.C. version than you did to the Marvel version even though some of the people working on the D.C. version actually worked on the Marvel version as well?

WOLFMAN: That's actually a strong point because we're not going to make the same mistakes. We made a lot of mistakes and in retrospect I can look back at that **Star Trek** stuff and say, "This is wrong."

The whole attitude of the book, which Mike Barr can tell you about right now, is completely different from what we did before because I know what the mistakes are when I look back at the book. Mike Barr is the writer and he's written two or three stories for it so far and I'm very pleased. It meshes beautifully with the artwork.

CF: Do you feel that anyone, so far, has done a good version of a Star Trek *comic? This includes Gold Key which did have a few issues done by Al McWilliams.*

WOLFMAN: I actually like some of the issues that Len Wein wrote. He kept the flavor within the very childish limitations that Gold Key put on him. But in Len's version the characters sounded right and in ours the characters sound right. I hear the voices, and being somebody who's not good at that (even when I wrote Marvel's **Star Trek** I never heard the voices in my head when I wrote it), I'm happy to be able to read something like that.

CF: Was the Marvel version cancelled because of poor sales or because of difficulty in working with the book?

WOLFMAN: My belief is poor sales, but I'm not certain.

CF: Because Gold Key managed to keep it going for about a dozen years.

WOLFMAN: I think people may have expected something better from Marvel and got, essentially a very poor book. Whereas they may not have expected anything from Gold Key and therefore just bought it.

I think that Mike can tell you about writing it because as big a Trek fan as I am, and I've seen every episode eight hundred times, he's seen them all twelve hundred times.

BARR: Maybe not twelve hundred times, but I do have them all on videotape.

CF: That's certainly good for useful reference.

BARR: I just started recording them off the local station a year and a half ago when I bought my video recorder, and now it works out great because if I want to review a certain situation I can just take out the episode and watch it.

CF: You were also involved with the Marvel Star Trek*?*

BARR: Yes, I did three issues over at Marvel [Note: Numbers 5, 6 and 17]. I did #5 and #6 to help out with a deadline crunch. Issue #5 was to conclude Marv's story when he quit Marvel.

WOLFMAN: It was really interesting because I had written the second half to that plot and then took it back after I left the company and Mike Barr wasn't even allowed to look at what I had planned.

BARR: We compared the versions later after mine was published and it was funny.

WOLFMAN: A lot of people thought I was heading for one direction in the story and Mike thought I was heading for another one. It's always interesting to see what another writer does with the storyline that you set up.

BARR: And it was fun working with Dave Cockrum, too.

CF: On the D.C. version, since you use elements from the TV series, how deeply into that do you plan to go?

BARR: The first story I've done uses some elements from the TV show; as Marv pointed out it uses the Organians and I think the third issue uses the race from the episode "The Savage Curtain", which Roddenberry and somebody else wrote.

CF: The rock creatures?

BARR: Yes, and it's all tied together into one big story.

That's another thing I've looked into. The most important thing that Marv has said to me so far as the editor was not to do one issue stories if the story doesn't call for it.

WOLFMAN: By the way, Mike does not know this, because I forgot to tell him, but Paramount just got the first issue [we sent them whatever was in plus the last few pages just lettered] and they loved it. They really loved it.

BARR: That's great!

WOLFMAN: It made me so happy when I heard that because they have approval on everything. They don't want mistakes to crop in or whatever else, but they were really ecstatic over the first issue. So I'm very pleased that what we're doing is being received correctly because we care about those characters very much.

CF: How closely is Paramount reviewing the plots that you're using?

BARR: They are reviewing them very closely.

CF: Are you intending to bring back other human characters who have appeared in the series?

BARR: I think so, but I don't know for sure, yet. There were a lot of really intriguing things that were left open in the TV series. But I don't want the comic book to become just a continuation of the TV series.

CF: Like old home week.

BARR: Yes, I don't want to become just old home week so one of the things I'm deliberately doing in the first three issues is introducing new characters on the Enterprise, who, to me, belong there just as much as Kirk and...I almost said Spock. Kirk and Sasvik and McCoy and Scotty and Chekov and Sulu and all the other guys.

CF: Prior to the release of Star Trek III, *are you thinking about doing any stories which might be flashbacks that deal with Spock?*

BARR: I've thought about that. I'd like to do something with the background of Sasvik since that has not been touched on.

CF: Would you use the background that Vonda McIntyre came up with in her Star Trek II *novelization?*

BARR: Yes, because as near as I can tell, Paramount authorized the novelization and so they must think that background is okay.

WOLFMAN: In fact it definitely is because I was speaking with Bill Rotsler who wrote the biographies and he was asked to change his background on Sulu to conform to the one Vonda McIntyre had written in **The Entropy Effect**, so they're following that very closely. So we'll stick with those since that's what Paramount's official biographies for the characters are now.

BARR: Yes, and as far as I'm concerned the sacred canon of **Star Trek** is the 79 episodes and the two movies, and that's basically what I see as the real **Star Trek.**

CF: Are you thinking of doing any of the more internalized characterizations, such as the one of Leila Kalomi who is someone who was portrayed as being from Spock's past in the episode where she appeared?

WOLFMAN: How did they handle that on the TV show?

CF: There was some kind of tension there where you could tell that Spock felt uncomfortable running into her until the spores brought out his uninhibited feelings.

BARR: It's possible, but what I want to do right now to keep the flavor of **Star Trek** in the comic book version is that the only captions I'm using are Kirk's starship log entries and everything else, so far, I've been able to communicate through dialogue or thought balloons, so there's no need for a caption that's outside of Kirk's narration to say—Suddenly the Klingon ship breaks through the bulkhead—because the visuals and dialogue will cover that.

CF: I was wondering how you're going to place the Chekov character. Is he supposed to be going back on the Enterprise since his ship, the Reliant, was destroyed?

WOLFMAN: I have a series of questions in at Paramount right now, including where Chekov is scheduled to go, what the ranks are and if they've changed anybody, what Kirk's actual rank is at this point as we have him as Captain. And so Paramount is checking out what all the different characters duties are now officially.

Comics Consumer Guide

MARVEL

Shipping January 3, on sale January 24

☐ **The Thing #11**—John Byrne. "Rocky Grimm, Space Adventurer"

☐ **Daredevil #206**—Foggy Nelson's wife is in trouble—and only Daredevil can help. By Denny O'Neil, penciled by William Johnson and inked by Danny Bulanadi.

☐ **New Mutants #15**—Kitty Pryde is caught in the clutches of the Hellfire Club. Guest stars Cloak and Dagger and is written by Chris Claremont, penciled by Sal Buscema and inked by Tom Mandrake.

☐ **Dazzler #32**—Jim Shooter wrote it, Frank Springer penciled it and Mike Esposito inked it and Bill Sienkiewicz painted the cover.

☐ **Conan The King #22**—King Conan has a clue to his son's killers. Written by Alan Zelenetz and penciled by Geof Isherwood. Cover by Michael Wm. Kaluta.

☐ **Kitty and Wolverine (Limited Series) #1**—What is the secret of Kitty Pryde's father? Written by Chris Claremont and penciled and inked by Al Milgrom.

☐ **Six From Sirius #2**—Written by Doug Moench and drawn by Paul Gulacy. Hudson stock, Direct Sales Only.

Shipping January 10, on sale January 31

☐ **Amazing Spider-Man #252**—A new costume for Spider-Man. Written by Roger Stern, penciled by John Romita, Jr.

☐ **Captain America #293**—Who is the Slayer? Guest-starring Baron Zemo. Written by J.M. DeMatteis and penciled and inked by Paul Neary.

☐ **Thor #343**—Someone will go to Valhalla by the end of the conflegration—who shall it be? Guest-starring Lorelei, Karnilla and Balder the Brave. Written, penciled and inked by Walt Simonson.

☐ **Indiana Jones #17**—Written by David Michelinie and penciled by Herb Trimpe.

☐ **Savage Sword of Conan #98**—Plot and pencils by John Buscema and script by Michael Reisher.

☐ **Moon Knight #37**—Whatever happened to Marc Spector's father? Written by Alan Zelenetz and penciled and inked by Bo Hampton. Direct sales only.

☐ **Micronauts #58**—The final chapter in the war against Baron Karza. Written by Bill Mantlo, penciled by Butch Guice and inked by Bob Wiacek. Direct Sales Only.

☐ **Crystar #7**—The origin of Malechon. Written by Jo Duffy, penciled by Ricardo Villamonte and inked by Dave Simons.

☐ **Tarzan Of The Apes (Limited Series) #2**—Part two of the original classic of Edger Rice Burroughs' Tarzan. Mark Evanier and Sherman Di-Vona writers and Dan Spiegle, artist.

Shipping January 17, on sale February 7

☐ **Incredible Hulk #295**—Written by Bill Mantlo, penciled by Sal Buscema and inked by Gerry Talaoc. A wounded Hulk faces Boomerang.

☐ **Avengers #243**—Roger Stern, writer, Al Milgrom, penciler and Joe Sinnott, inker.

☐ **Conan The Barbarian #158**—"The Night of the Wolf" is plotted and drawn by John Buscema, scripted by Michael Reisher and inked by Ernie Chan.

☐ **Marvel Tales #163**—Re-presenting **Spider-Man #25** by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko.

☐ **X-Men #181**—Guest appearance by Sunfire. Written by Chris Claremont, penciled by John Romita, Jr. and inked by Dan Green. A giant dragon in Tokyo.

☐ **Rom #54**—Guest-starring Nick Fury, SHIELD and Doctor Strange. Written by Bill Mantlo, penciled by Sal Buscema and inked by Mel Candido.

☐ **Power Man And Iron Fist #105**—Pencils by Greg LaRocque.

☐ **G.I. Joe #23**—Written by Larry Hama, penciled by Mike Vosberg and inked by Jon D'Agostino. Introducing Duke—the newest Joe.

☐ **Marvel Fanfare #14**—"The Vision" by Roger McKenzie, Ricardo Vilamonte and Joe Rubenstein plus Quicksilver by Jo Duffy and Alan Weiss. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **Epic Illustrated #23**—"Marada the She Wolf". Also, the continuing chapters of "The Secred and the Profane" and "Generation Zero". Cover painting by John Bolton.

Shipping January 24, on sale February 14

☐ **Fantastic Four #286**—Special guest penciler Kerry Gammil, writer and inker John Byrne.

☐ **Marvel Team Up #141**—Daredevil and the Black Widow. Written by Bill Mantlo, penciled by Ron Frenz

and inked by Mike Esposito.

☐ **Iron Man #182**—Tony Stark makes the decision plus Rhode dons all-new armor. Denny O'Neil, writer, Luke McDonnell, penciler and Steve Mitchell, inker.

☐ **Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man #90**—Written by Bill Mantlo, penciled by Al Milgrom and inked by Jim Mooney.

☐ **The New Defenders #131**—See the Beast on his college lecture tour. Plotted by J.M. DeMatteis, scripted by Peter B. Gillis and penciled and inked by Alan Kupperberg.

☐ **Star Wars #83**—Written by Jo Duffy, penciled by Ron Frenz and inked by Tom Palmer.

☐ **Alpha Flight #10**—Origin of Northstar. Written, penciled and inked by John Byrne.

☐ **Dreadstar #9**—Vanth finally learns what lies behind the mask of the vizier named Z. By Jim Starlin. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **Hercules (Limited Series) #3**—Written, penciled and inked by Bob Layton. Thanos and the death of Apollo.

☐ **Beauty And The Beast (Limited Series) #1**—Written by Ann Nocenti, penciled by Don Perlin and inked by Kim DeMulder. Exposed as a mutant, Dazzler goes underground. The Beast falls in love. Plus Dr. Doom.

☐ **Marvel Graphic Novel #11—Heartburst**—Written and drawn by Rick Veitch. Heartburst is an outer space love story. Direct Sales Only.

Shipping the week of January 10th for an on sale date of February 2nd

☐ **Justice Leage of America #226**—Story by Joey Cavalieri, pencils by Chuck Patton and inks by Romeo Tanghal. Part 2 of "Flatlux".

☐ **Wonder Woman #315**—Story by Dan Mishkin and art by Don Heck. Prisoner of the Amazons.

☐ **Atari Force #5**—Story by Gerry Conway, pencils by Ross Andru, inks by Jose Luis Garcia Lopez and cover by Jose Lopez. The Dark Destroyer.

☐ **Blackhawk #270**—Story by Mark Evanier and art by Spiegle.

☐ **DC Comics Presents #89**—Evanier, Novick and Jensen. Costarring the Blackhawks.

☐ **The Fury of Firestorm #23**—Story by Gerry and Carla Conway, pencils by Rafael Kayanan, inks by Rodin Rodriguez and cover by Rafael Kayanan. Bug and Byte strike.

Continued on Page 61

STRIP SEARCH

MAX ALLAN COLLINS

An introductory note: **Comics Feature** *has invited me to write a regular column about continuity strips—and I have agreed to take a crack at it, at least for a while. My motion is to deal primarily with classic strips—discussing a current story-strip is an awkward proposition for someone currently writing one; but occasionally, when discussing a classic strip that has continued on to the present day, it will be necessary for me to deal with its current incarnation, as well. Such is certainly the case with the first strip I've chosen to discuss....*

DICK TRACY: THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE

Dick Tracy, acclaimed as "the world's most famous detective," has been fighting crime for nearly fifty-two years, now; but the passage of time has only increased his popularity with over 100 million readers.

In 1933 the detective in the snap-brim hat and black suit (and, when the weather called for it, yellow trench coat) first appeared on the comic pages of America and caused an immediate sensation: for the first time, a comic strip hero was dealing with crime in a tough, two-fisted manner that seemed startling—and vastly entertaining—to readers of the "funny papers." While other strips have preceded Chester Gould's Tracy in the telling of continued stories (notably Harold Grey's **Little Orphan Annie**), it was Gould and Tracy, in hard-hitting tales of crime and punishment, who brought action and a taste of reality to the comics; soon after, story strips—adventure strips—were a part of the American scene, and Tracy himself a household word.

MAX ALLAN COLLINS

Gould, an Oklahoman, had been trying to break into comics over ten years, when Captain Patterson of the Chicago Tribune New York News Syndicate finally accepted **Plainclothes Tracy**—redubbing it **Dick Tracy**, after the slang of the day (a "dick", in underworld jargon, being a detective).

"In the 1920's," Gould says, "the United States was bleeding, literally and figuratively, through the dark, dry days of the Prohibition era. Illegal bootlegging activities, which had begun quickly but modestly after the Volstead Act was passed, became more and more overt with each passing month. The rate of related crimes and every type of terrible violence which accompanies them spread like the relentless cancer it was. Innocent people, who at first believed they were simply taking the path of least resistance by offering no objection to the criminal activities taking place all around them, were soon caught in a hopeless tangle of fear. They were frightened by the threats of rival underworld gangs to each other. As the wealth and power of the mobs mushroomed, the battle for law and order seemed beyond prayer. Criminals had corrupted not only those victims who closed their eyes to the bootlegging, robbery, extortion and murder occuring on every side, but also the very people being paid to protect the decent, law-abiding citizens who were powerless on their own. Policemen, lawyers, judges and politicians all were added to the payrolls of the mobs, and the last small chance for justice appeared doomed forever.

"The police, an' the rest of of the law-enforcement community," Gould continues, "simply were not doing the job. Something had to be done; someone had to do it. That is when Dick Tracy arrived on the scene—the modern equivalent of a knight in shining armor on his white stallion. The country didn't need a detective to sit in an armchair and theorize...it needed someone as tough as the gangsters were...Dick Tracy was that man."

During the 1930s Gould attended Northwestern University to study criminology, and for many years afterward employed A. A. Valenis, a

retired policeman and one of the first police artists, to help keep the police procedure in Tracy accurate and up-to-the-minute. In fact, Gould has anticipated technological advances in police science with such "inventions" as the Two-Way Wrist Radio, use of television in crime prevention (monitoring potential crime areas, and close-circuit city-to-city suspect "lineups") and the Voice-O-Graf (voice print analysis). And, of course, one of the latest Tracy inventions is now a reality: the Wrist TV (Two-Way Wrist TVs are as yet to be marketed, however).

"There are but two claimants to the title of most famous detective in the world," says Otto Penzler, editor of **The Great Detectives** (Little Brown, 1978). "Sherlock Holmes and Dick Tracy. Both have added their names to the language as virtual synonyms for intelligent, relentless, effective crimefighters." No less an authority than mystery writer Ellery Queen has cited **Dick Tracy** as being the first "police story," the first to use police procedure as a basis for fiction. Television's **Dragnet**, hailed as innovative in the 50s, had in Jack Webb's Sgt. Friday and his humorous sidekicks a direct parallel to Tracy and Sam Catchem, and Webb's pain-staking attention to accuracy similarly mirrors Gould. Private eyes like Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer took their tough, trenchcoated image from Tracy, and the villains of Ian Fleming's James Bond are variations on Gould's, as is the Bond use of gadgetry: the elaborate car in **Goldfinger** seems patterned after a similar car that appeared in **Dick Tracy** in 1956. Even the superheroes of the comic books owe a debt to Tracy: square-jawed Batman joins with Robin, who is merely Junior Tracy in super-hero drag, to fight an assortment of Gould-like crazy villains.

And perhaps it is the villains of **Dick Tracy** that have, more than anything else, caught the imagination of the public. The grotesque gallery of bad guys in **Dick Tracy** reflects the evil visage of each: Flattop, the contract killer with the wide flat head, hooded eyes and cupid mouth; Pruneface, a murderer whose features lurked within a hideously wrinkled mask of a face; the Brow, Nazi spy, whose black, beady eyes peered out from under a high forehead with half a dozen prominent ridges; Mumbles, the blond, sleepy-eyed singer who mumbled his speech and murdered his associates; the rodent-faced Mole, who ran an underground hotel for felons and often murdered his guests; and Half-and-Half, a homicidal con man whose face was marred by acid, but only on one side. These and many more met a grisly if not justly-deserved fate; although some, like the colorful B. O. Plenty and Gravel Gertie, survived to reform and become good citizens (and great comic strip characters).

The combination of reality—the strip's accurate police procedure, and its gritty, life-and-death atmosphere—coupled with fantasy—the larger-than-life villains and a vivid drawing style that is neither cartoony nor realistic and yet is both at the same time—makes **Dick Tracy** unique among comic strips. Its appeal has spread to other media—books, records, radio, television, animated cartoons, movie serials, feature films—virtually every facet of the entertainment world has been touched by Dick Tracy. (Reportedly Paramount Pictures is preparing to make their long-threatened Tracy feature.

In August 1977 I began writing the script for **Dick Tracy** (the first strip appearing December 26, 1977), consulting frequently with Chester Gould along the way (by phone), and the artwork was assumed by Gould's longtime associate Rick Fletcher, who had worked with Gould on Tracy for sixteen years. Fletcher's own strip, the historical Sunday page **Old Glory Story**, had a lengthy run in the 1950s and 60s.

I have been a Tracy fan for most of my thirty-five years. I wrote a letter to Gould in 1955, which he answered, and we have been friends ever since. My friendship with Chet Gould

THIS STAIRWAY LEADS TO THE BASEMENT. I'LL SHOW 'EM!
HOW CAN A GUY THAT FULL OF LEAD MOVE?
DOWN THE STEEL STEPS!
BUMP
BUMP BUMP
CLANG

YOU CAN PASS THE CHILD IN THE CARRIER THROUGH TO ME—AND AVOID SETTING OFF THE METAL DETECTOR—
THAT'S VERY KIND—BUT SUPPOSE I WERE A SKYJACKER, SMUGGLING A GUN ONTO THE PLANE?
BUT YOU AREN'T—YOU'RE DICK TRACY, THE DETECTIVE. I'VE SEEN YOUR PICTURE IN THE PAPERS SINCE I WAS A KID.
FIRST SHE QUESTIONS MY EFFECTIVENESS AS A DETECTIVE BY POINTING OUT I'M WELL-KNOWN—THEN MAKES ME FEEL ANCIENT.
"YOU CAN'T BE TOO ANCIENT," SAYS TESS, "IF YOU JUST HAD A BABY, DIDN'T YOU?"
GUN CONCEALED IN BLANKET IN CARRIER
A few minutes later—
DO YOU HAVE ANY SEATS LEFT ON THIS FLIGHT?
YES, MISS.
© TRACY, ISLE, EMME

Tracy, Isle, Emme

however didn't figure in my landing the job; the people at the Tribune Company Syndicate contacted me largely on the basis of my published writing in the mystery field.

The period of the strip that had the greatest impact on me, growing up, and which has most inspired my own approach to the strip, is the early 1950s. Tracy was not carried by my local paper (it still isn't so much for hometown heroes) and I followed Tracy in the Harvey reprint comic books. The two stories that hit me hardest were reprinted by Harvey in 1954 and appeared in the strip in 1951 and 1952.

Chronologically the second, but the first I happened to read, was the Model Jones story. That was Junior Tracy's "coming of age" story—after decades of being a kid, Junior was dragged by Gould into adolescence—and nearly became a husband, in the course of it. Meeting Model Jones, a pretty, "older" girl, at a skating rink, Junior falls head-over-heels for her and a courtship ensues; but Model—mindful of Junior's proper upbringing—is afraid her drunken parents and juvenile delinquent brother, Larry, will taint her in her boyfriend's eyes. Junior, of course, could care less, and finally the pair prepares to elope; waiting in a diner with Junior for the honeymoon bus to arrive, Model hears a radio report saying her brother Larry has killed a cop. Junior is unaware of this, and when Model rebuffs him ("So long, squirt!"), leaving him for his own good, he is crushed; in a singularly expressionistic panel, Gould depicts Junior alone on the highway, watching the bus disappear in the distance, as the sun goes down.

The story's real impact, however, comes from the shocking death of its heroine. A sweet, innocent girl, Model is (accidentally) killed by her own brother, whom she's trying to aid. Her shooting was the cliffhanger of the Harvey comic book (#79), and I remember vividly waiting throughout that next month to see if Model survived—and being stunned, ruined, changed-for-life when she didn't. The impact of Model's death on me at age seven has shaped much of my approach to fiction-writing.

The other early 50s story that hit me hard featured "The Fiendish Photographers," Crewy Lou and Sphinx. Crewy Lou, a cute crew-cut blonde, and her mute crony Sphinx, were the villains of Chester Gould's most complex, well-written crime thriller—a tale worthy of W.R. Burnett (**Little Caesar, The Asphalt Jungle**). Its plot is too complex to summarize here, but it concerns jewel theft, murder, organized crime, kidnapping and fratricide, among other niceties. It is Gould at his creative peak—an adult tale, with his trademark grotesque villains staying within more realistic bounds than those stories usually considered "classic" (like Rattop). Also, there is a nice balance between the villains and tough-detective Tracy himself (who at times gets lost in the shuffle in his own strip—I'm guilty of this as well—but who here is shooting and detecting aplenty); and powerhouse emotional impact, when Tracy's infant daughter is kidnapped. Strangely, the death of Crewy Lou is touching, disturbing; we are sad to see her go.

The 1950s represented a relatively realistic period in the strip's history. Tracy of the 30s is largely concerned with comic strip variations on the real-life villains of the day, Big Boy/Al Capone, Boris Arson/John Dillinger, Zora Arson/Bonnie Parker, Larceny Lu/Me Barker; at the same time, human interest plots and subplots

shared the stage—often harking back to Gould's idol Harold Gray, in what might today be considered soap-opera storylines. Tracy of the 40s showed Gould in full swing, with the "crazy" villains emerging strong and, while the human-interest subplots never disappeared, more comedy was introduced and the art and writing became slicker, more modern. By the early 50s Gould was hitting his stride; soap-opera elements began to creep back in, rather overtly but effectively [perhaps in response to the popularity of such strips as **Rex Morgan** and **Mary Worth**] and the police-procedural aspect of the strip took on added weight. The period 1950-1952 is Gould at his most mature as an artist and writer. Sadly, this period has been neglected in latterday reprint volumes; Gould's true peak is overlooked because the 30s and 40s have more "nostalgia" appeal.

Other 1950s stories of merit include those centering on villains Blowtop, TV Wiggles, Dr. Plain, Wormy, Empty Williams and the last of the great Gould stories, Joe Period/Flattop Jr. Other good stories were to follow, including Spots and Miss Egghead, and such vivid villains as Piggy and Half-and-Half would emerge in the 60s, a period dominated by Gould's controversial moon sequences. Into the 60s and 70s, Gould allowed his imagination to run free; his work during these years was undeniably uneven and quirky—but was quite often wonderful. The 1960s and early 70s may have been Gould the artist's expressionistic highpoint. A major reassessment of Gould's later work is already overdue.

The National Cartoonist Society itself voiced its approval of Chester Gould and **Dick Tracy** in April 1978 by awarding the strip its annual Reuben Award. It was Gould's second Reuben, a rare honor from his peers.

Early in my Tracy scripting, I attempted to bring the strip full circle: the first villain in the strip, Big Boy, returns after forty-six years [twenty, in the time frame of the strip] to place a $1,000,000 "open contract" on the great detective. Big Boy is the character responsible for the death of Emil Trueheart, father of Tracy's then-fiancee [and now wife] Tess. With only six months to live, the aging Big Boy has but one remaining wish in life: to see Dick Tracy dead. Needless to say, despite that high-priced contract [and the efforts of superhitman, The Iceman], Big Boy does not get his wish.

Oddly, fans occasionally have complained that I bring back classic villains too often [others, of course, complain that I do this too seldom]. Among others I've resurrected are Mumbles, Half-and-Half and the Mole. For the 50th anniversary story, we checked back in on Coffyhead, Pearshape, Influence, Measles, Wormy, Dewdrop, Blowtop and Mousy; some of these folks had reformed—others had not. We've also returned several recurring characters to the cast, characters abandoned by Gould, such

as FBI Inspector Jim Treylor, ham actor Vitamin Flintheart and Pat Patton's girl friend Toby Townley (now Mrs. Petton). Renewed emphasis has been given to B.O. Plenty, Gravel Gertie and Sparkle, and Diet Smith remains an important figure in Tracy's world. Certain recurring characters were unceremoniously dispatched (Vera Alldid was divorced, off-stage; Moon Maid blown up in a car); and some new recurring characters joined the cast: Lee Ebony, a black policewoman; and Johnny Adonis, a police detective, now a private eye. Some relatives of deceased villains have been introduced—notably, Angeltop, Rattop's daughter, and the Brow's son (who is otherwise nameless).

Angeltop was my first Tracy story and artist Rick Fletcher did a beautiful job bringing her to life. She remains, perhaps, the major Collins/Fletcher addition to the roster of Tracy villains. Other of our villains who have struck me as being particularly effective are art-thief Art Dekko and his beautiful mustached accomplice Sue Reel, arsonist Torcher, kidnapper Breakdown and video-pirate Splitscreen. The final Fletcher-drawn story—and one of Rick's favorites, I'm told—concerned another pair of relatives: Twitchy, brother of Itchy and B.D. Eyes, brother of B.B. Eyes. It strikes me as fitting that Rick's last story should, like the first, involve a famous villain's relatives. Angeltop and Twitchy are good examples of what we were up to: attempting to bring in elements of the classic years of the strip while keeping a modern touch. The Twitchy story, for example, had to do with the faking of a ghost (the ghost of Itchy, in fact) via holography.

Rick died in March of 1983. He came within a week of completing the Twitchy story (he did all but a week of dailies—and did several Sundays into the next story). While we were not personally close, I miss him; he was a real pro, and did something next to impossible: maintained a sense of Gould's style without subverting his own. As the years pass, I think his contribution to Tracy will be looked upon most favorably.

Tracy, of course, goes on. Rick's replacement is Dick Locher, himself a former Gould assistant in the late 50s and early 60s. Locher is an editorial cartoonist for the Chicago **Tribune** and recently won a Pulitzer Prize. Tracy could hardly hope for a more appropriate, talented artist, and I look forward to a fruitful, interesting collaboration with Dick Locher—Chet Gould himself is most pleased with this choice.

Locher is currently finishing up the final story begun by Fletcher (the Lofty story—though it should be noted that villain Lofty had not yet appeared in Rick's strips, and is Locher-designed). And we are cooking up something very special for the first fully Locher-drawn story...involving the return of a **very** famous villain...

Despite the best efforts of that aforementioned (but unnamed) villain, it's safe to say that Dick Tracy will be alive and well for many years to come. The world's greatest detective is, after all, a comic strip institution. If Rattop and Big Boy couldn't kill him, I probably won't be able to.

Copyright 1976, 1983, Max Allen Collins

BIO: **Max Collins** ***is the current scripter of the*** **Dick Tracy** ***comic strip; and is the writer and co-creator (with artist Terry Beatty) of the*** **Ms. Tree** ***comic book feature. He is the author of thirteen published novels, including the recent*** No Cure For Death ***(Walker, $12.95), and the forthcoming*** True Detective ***(St. Martins, $14.95).***

MARV WOLFMAN

As the writer of one of the two most popular comic books published today Marv Wolfman has become a major creative force within the industry. Today everyone knows who he is. But as is so often the case very few know what really makes this man tick. What are the influences that effect how he works, what he brings to a book and his relationship with the company he works for and the people he works with?

During the course of his career Wolfman has been a leading force within fandom and as an editor of Warren, Marvel and DC. He has enjoyed and accepted many of the mainstays of the comic book industry and has rejected an equal number of "obvious" and accepted precepts. He has very clear opinions about what does and what does not make good comics, but here let him tell you himself.

CF: Where were you born?

Wolfman: Brooklyn, New York.

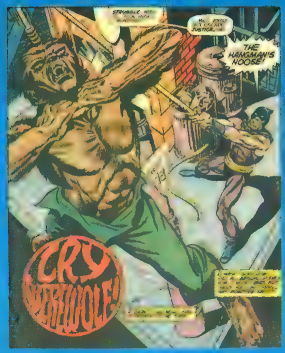
CF: Right in the heart of the Big Apple where the comic companies are located. Did you start reading comics at an early age?

Wolfman: I started at five with the Superman line of books.

CF: Was that before Marvel?

Wolfman: This was in 1951 at least ten years before Marvel. What happened was I used to watch Superman TV show when it was on network...the first run of Superman shows. At the end it said, "Based on the character appearing in Superman Action Comics Magazine." I ran out...they didn't have any of those but I bought **Superboy.** Then I started buying all the Superman line for a few years. Then Batman...well, **World's Finest** next which was logical, then **Batman** which was logical after that. I slowly advanced to whatever was out there.

CF: That's a good case where a media tie-in actually brought somebody in to reading the books themselves. At that time you began looking at the many artists working



under the Bob Kane name.

Wolfman: I guess so. Of course, I had no idea that there were different artists at the time. The only thing I always knew was that the covers seemed to be better than the insides. Later when Jimmy Olsen started, I guess in 1954, Jimmy Olsen was the best drawn of all the Superman books. I had no idea that the reason was that Curtis Swan did those and did the covers. You know, this was before [illegible]. I was on [illegible] and the different artists were.

CF: Did you begin to script your own amateur strips, almost immediately?

Wolfman: I'd say by the time I was eight. Once I knew that you could make up stories—could write them and draw them. My background was in art, not in writing. I only [illegible]. In fact, Not before I did comics, but simultaneous with my early days in comics I was teaching art. Only my art sense, strangely enough, is not comic book. I can't really draw comics—I'm more a designer. I had a commercial background and I was really not a good artist in terms of drawing at all, but I can lay out a story. I did several. In [illegible] and was to **The Castle of Frankenstein.** We wrote and drew the story together—lettered it and did everything.

CF: The first strips that anyone really saw of yours were for fanzines in the Sixties.

Wolfman: Right. Those I did for years. First with some comedy fanzines—because I've always enjoyed writing comedy. Then for a book called **Super Adventure** and **Stories of Suspense,** which was a horror fanzine, and a fanzine called **What Th'...?**, which was given away free. You just had to send a self addressed stamped envelope for it. It was a sixteen page commentary. I did work for other fanzines as well, **Fighting Heroes** and all sorts of [illegible] back in the early Sixties.

CF: Were you writing articles about comics as well?

Wolfman: Not too much, no.

CF: You were more interested in actually creating strips.

Wolfman: Very much so. It was a sort of beginning ground once I decided that I liked comics and wanted to [illegible] how to do it.

CF: A number of today's creators actually started that way, say in the pages of the Texas Trio magazines.

Wolfman: Right. I don't think I ever got anything from them. But then, I don't believe I ever submitted anything to them either. I was more interested in doing it myself. I originally started by working with GB Love...He published a fanzine called **Fighting Heroes Comics** and I [illegible] "Really like your writing, but your art's not so great." So I tended to write more stories than I drew for him. Then I published my own fanzine—several fanzines—and went on from there.

CF: Did you do these strips in their entirety or did you work with others?

Wolfman: Some of them I wrote and had other artists draw, and some other people did completely. I couldn't do the whole fanzine myself, although I tended to write almost all the stories.

CF: On the stories that you wrote and others drew, did you work with anyone who would be familiar to us now?

Wolfman: Steve Leialoha. He did a strip with me called **Genard The Space Viking**...an early sword and sorcery type thing. It was before Conan. I really can't recall all of them today, but a lot of them eventually became professional.

CF: Were these magazines actually entirely distributed through the mails before there was such a thing as a comic shop or even a comic convention?

Wolfman: Oh yes, we used to advertise in the **Rocket Blast** and several other places. At that point nobody was

doing offset fanzines so you were working with...what...is it called...ditto.

CF: Ditto or mimeograph.

Wolfman: That meant that you had a print run of 110 or 120 and you would sell them for 35-40 cents and they contained approximately 50-60 pages. You never made money in those days. You couldn't print enough to pay back. You did it because you really wanted to. This was two years into fandom. The first year was, of course, **The Comic Reader,** and **On The Drawing Board, Alter Ego** and then **The Rocket Blast** began about a year after. I read them all. I read all the magazines I published. I published four separate fanzines in all. In order, I published **The Foob**, which was a humor fanzine, **Super Adventures,** which was super-heroes, **Stories of Suspence,** which was horror, and then **What Th'...?**, which was commentary.

CF: Did any of these characters survive...I guess Nova comes to mind.

Wolfman: Nova was directly from my fanzine. Which is the original character, Black Nova, which has the same costume, and Marvel owns the copyright on Nova, A Man called Nova—at least until things can be proved otherwise. So I keep wondering, if I wanted to, if I can still do Black Nova, which is the same exact costume.

CF: Did you ever do anything to challenge copyright?

Wolfman: No. But if the copyright law changes that would become an interesting thing. Right now I have no reason.

CF: Unfortunately, I'm not sure the character would be worth the legal effort.

Wolfman: Probably not. I'm just saying if the copyright law ever changes and it was clearly the creator, it would be an interesting thing.

CF: Did any other characters emerge in an incarnation prior to use in regular comics?

Wolfman: No. Most of them were not that great as characters per se, but a lot of the concepts that I was using back then did. For instance, I did a story—one of the stories I'm most proud of from my early days of professional comics—called "The Maze"—and I did it using typeset copy across the bottom of the page. I had experimented with that in one of my fanzines first. So there were two stories being told at the same time. One the regular comic book story and then underneath it the emotional story. It worked real beautifully in "The Maze" story. I believe it appeared in **Witching Hour #13** or something like that. I don't remember. Conceptually a lot terested in the continuing story and change in characters and things of that sort way back then.

CF: When Marvel came along, did it bring a change in the books you read or have any impact?

Wolfman: Marvel came about in 1961 when I was about 15 or so. Instantly there were better books. I mean, DC still had a lot of books that I enjoyed—**Green Lan-**

vel quickly out distanced them. They were just more dynamic, more interesting, better told stories. They didn't rely on gimmick stories. When Stan hit his peak, which was about the middle run of FF, with the Silver Surfer, the Inhumans and all that sort of stuff...you know that all superhero comic company that came close. Though there were a lot of people publishing then—Tower, ACG, DC, I enjoyed them all—but the Marvels were far better.

CF: When you first started reading comics, there were a lot of comic companies around that still produced superheroes. Between that point and say, 1961, the number of superheroes radically declined.

Wolfman: Well, there was only Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman and Blackhawk, if you consider Blackhawk a superhero, that were published continuously and in 56 I guess the Flash and then the Green Lantern in 58.

CF: Were you interested in other types of books besides superheroes?

Wolfman: I read everything; I bought all the Archies; I bought all the Harvey s; all the ACG s. It really didn't matter. I never saw the EC s until I was much older. Except for the war books which I didn't start to appreciate until I was much older—Bob Kanigher did some magnificent work back then with beautiful art by Kubert, Heath, Andru and Esposito, Drucker, you know all of those people—but I wasn't interested in war so I didn't buy those, and I didn't buy the love books. Outside that I think I bought everything.

CF: A very large amount of the books at that point were horror comics.

Wolfman: I never saw them. Except for the ACGs and they were mainly supernatural type comics.

CF: Not even the Atlas Comics?

Wolfman: No...never interested. They always looked cheap.

CF: The short monster stories?

Wolfman: I'm even thinking before then when they were doing the EC rip-offs. That stuff was really gross. I've never cared for horror all that much. So if it was at all violent I probably never bought it.

CF: I find that an interesting comment from someone who wrote **Dracula** for years and then created **Night Force.**

Wolfman: I like writing it, but I don't particularly enjoy reading it.

CF: Returning to the early Marvels, did you feel there was something at a fundamental level that was different from what the other companies were doing?

Wolfman: The stories as Stan developed his characters—not in the early issues where they were pretty straightforward comic book stories with some characterization about gimmicks. They weren't, "let's figure out the mystery of..." but some about the characters—Sue falling in love with the Sub-Mariner. The characters themselves became more interesting to read about then the stories they were dealing with. That's something I've taken to heart as a writer and very often my plots are not as important to me as what is happening to the character itself. My feeling is that by the time somebody has read three or four years of comics, 60 comics a month, you've read almost every plot that you will ever read. There's not a whole lot that hasn't been done. But you can keep coming up with interesting character things, and that's what Stan started and really developed along with Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko and the others.

CF: So the idea is to make you feel for these characters. Then you care what happens to them.

Wolfman: Right. Jack had been doing that for years. One of my favorite comics of all time was **Boys Ranch**. It's a book he did in about '51 or '52, a book he did with Joe Simon and it was a beautiful comic book about characters. Another

Little Wise Guys and such that Charles Biro did. He wrote stories about people and the plots themselves to me were less interesting than the stories he was telling. I really don't care for gimmicks. I can write them if I'm asked to but I don't care about them. I'm really interested in the people.

CF: Don't the characterizations themselves tend to become gimmicks with use?

Wolfman: If they're badly handled or if you rush them, yes.

CF: It seems as if there are almost cookie cutter motives that...

Wolfman: What happens is that when you start to do books...up until recently in order to make a good living in comics you had to write five or six comics a month as I was for a long time at Marvel. Consequently you can't put a whole lot of effort into every book. They became very much cookie cutter characters...cookie cut-outs. What has happened recently is that everybody pretty much allows the creators who are on a book that sells to cut down their work load. Since I've been at DC, I've cut down from six books a month to three books a month. You can spend a lot more time working out the subtle characterizations.

CF: Isn't one of the significant problems that after a while a character becomes standardized and goes through set motions as opposed to actually evolving?

Wolfman: It's a definite problem. One of the ways to avoid that is to make certain that you don't rest easy with a character. In other words, that you are allowed to change him. If you're not allowed to change him what happens is what essentially happened to an awful lot of the characters at both DC and Marvel. All they do is repeat the same personality traits. In fact, today I would tend to say that the majority of comics don't have characterization as much as they have personalities because changing that and moving it around, then you can have good characterization as well. We're not always producing. You would probably have to write one book. **Dracula**—as strong as it was—I think it was because that's all I wrote for a long time. I didn't have any other assignments. So I was able to put all my effort into doing characterization on that and the characters did change. It's harder when you're writing several books a month. I can't change Superman all that much when I write Super-

man. Not because of company policy but simply because of other writers' policies on Superman, I'm only one of many writers. **Night Force** was created to change. Unfortunately it didn't sell. **Teen Titans** sat still for a little while and I am only now starting to go back to make sure that

spent so much time setting up everything that the characters, to me, stagnated a while

CF: They became cliches.

Wolfman: Working with George Perez, we are completely co-plotting the book together. We want to really start making advances in the characters. Changes in the

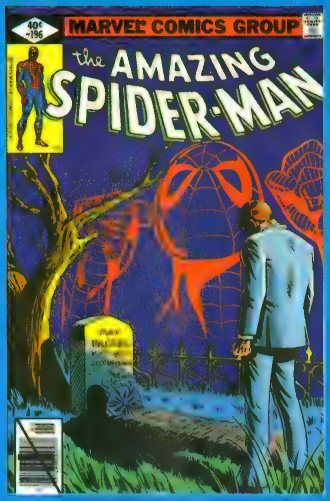
exactly the same as they were the previous year. Most people stay somewhat the same in real life, but subtle things change and if we can do that I'll be very happy.

CF: You mentioned Boys Ranch and The Little Wise Guys.

Sonalities?

Wolfman: It's been a while since I've read the Little Wise Guys. The Boys Ranch stuff...again this was something that hadn't been done in comics before. There's one particular issue of **Boys Ranch** and if you read them in order I think it's number three, a story called "Muffin Delilha," that was so lovely. It built not only in plot and mood but in the characterization of their lead character, called Angel,

40¢
198
NOV
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
ALL THESE MONTHS I'VE BEEN AFFRONTING ME AT ONCE!
BUT HOW CAN I TELL WHICH IS MY REAL FOE?
MYSTERIO IS DEADLIER BY THE DOZEN!!



a young kid who is terribly affected during the course of the story. It's a beautiful little story. Again, comics because they are by nature a shorthand form of writing—we can not do, say the complete characterizations that

over a long period of time but we can't do it in each individual story.

CF: Don't you run into an inherent contradiction when you try to slowly build something like that when every book is

whole readership tends to turn over?

Wolfman: I know that's probably true. I don't concern myself with that in the characterizations of the books. I concern myself with that in how I write my captions, the explanation of who the characters are. They are all named

quickly so that they are all fairly clear to the readers. But in terms of developing the characters, they're coming in as if they were coming in in the middle of a soap opera. You're completely lost in the first issue, but if you're interested enough, you'll pick up the second issue and learn more, and by the time you're into the third issue, you probably know enough to follow the book without any problem.

CF: I guess in real life when you meet somebody you don't immediately know everything about them either.

Wolfman: Precisely, information is unraveled very slowly.

CF: You mentioned that when Stan Lee launched the [illegible] an almost preconceived master plan.

Wolfman: Stan has said that he handled the Marvel Bullpen, in the way he approached it, as a form of an adver- [illegible] books fun through the Bullpen Bulletins and the way he wrote and constructed them. It became a big family. He made jokes and he put himself down and all the things that had not been done in comics but are very common in advertising. Poking fun at the product—Arthur Godfrey did that, back in the Fifties on TV and it became the big thing. I'm sure that it was done with Fred Allen on radio. You didn't follow so much the Fantastic Four; you became a Marvel fan. That's why Marvel still has this incredible fandom, because Stan took this very straight forward approach about making the book enjoyable as a whole entity, something that DC has never been able to do because of the multiple editor system that's been up at the company. You either like one DC or you don't like it. At Marvel, even if you don't like books, you still buy them all, or you used to buy them all simply because they were somehow one big happy family.

CF: Wasn't it also because of the amount of cross-overs [illegible] they tended to...

Wolfman: Yes, but there were no cross-overs in the early **Sgt. Fury** and yet the way Stan wrote it...

CF: Except Captain America.

Wolfman: But for the most part they were still a straight warbook. They still seemed to fit into the Marvel Universe that Stan was creating.

CF: After a few years didn't they bring the Sgt. Fury character into the Marvel Universe?

Wolfman: Yes, very much so. They did have Captain America, Reed Richards and all that, but even from the [illegible] Rock. His best books never read anything like Superman or the Flash. There was no connection.

CF: Wasn't that also because the Marvel line was so much smaller?

Wolfman: Yes, also because one man was handling it. [illegible] similar style. **Spiderman** was not written in the same style as **Thor** and those weren't written in the same style

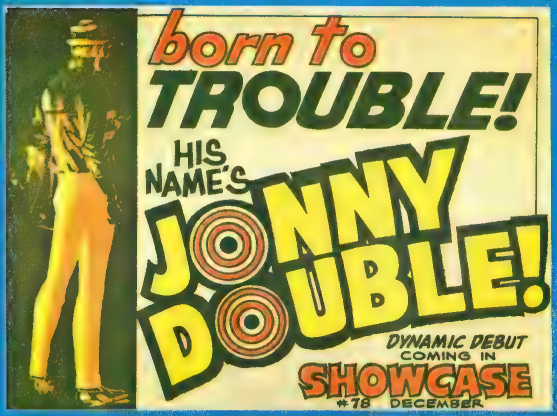
THIS ISN'T A JOYRIDE, JOHNNY! IT'S MORE SERIOUS THAN YOU THINK!
BEN, SUE AND I WERE STRUCK BY A SHROUD, METABOLIC BOOSTER
WE HAVE LESS THAN THREE DAYS TO FIND GALACTUS AND TO PERSUADE HIM TO HELP US STOP THE SPHINX
I'M CONFIDENT WE CAN CURE THE SPREADING EFFECTS, BUT IT WON'T BE EASY
REED! I--I DIDN'T KNOW NOBODY TOLD ME!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT XANDAR. THE NEW CHAMPIONS CAN TAKE CARE OF THE CHRELTIS

as the **Fantastic Four**, or any of the others. He had a completely different concept in as far as the captions or in the type of plots used. With the exception of The Sandman, which was quickly gotten rid of, Spiderman fought only gimmick villains. Very earth-rooted. No super powers per se. You had Electro after a while, but Sandman was gotten rid of after one appearance. Most of them were people like the Green Goblin—a gimmick, or Doctor Octopus—another gimmick character. Things of that sort. The vulture is a guy in a suit. That was rooted basically in comic book reality. The **Fantastic Four** was comic book science fiction. **Thor** was...I can't even place where **Thor**

CF: Mythology.
Wolfman: Well he didn't really follow it all that much.

CF: It wasn't an accurate mythology but it was a feeling of mythology.
Wolfman: Exactly.
CF: Did the difference between **Spiderman** and the **Fantastic Four** result from Stan Lee's writing the books differently or is this part of the whole controversy where Jack Kirby claims that he had a good deal of the writing chore for the **Fantastic Four**. Ditko claims that he had a good deal of the writing chore for **Spiderman**, and ultimately he did receive co-writer credit.
Wolfman: Co-plotter. If you notice, I was talking in the way he did his captions and things of that sort, his writing style. I'm not putting down either Jack or Steve because I doubt if Stan could have done that on his own. I think it was a synthesis of the people, which is another reason why I think Stan was so important as an editor to Marvel. I think he was able to bring out of these people as an editor better than they had ever done previously in terms of their thinking. Steve did work I just love. He had never been as strong—his plotting—as it was on those books. Jack I don't think has been as strong, either, in terms of straight story-telling, yet Stan hasn't done **quite** as good without them. So I think it's a beautiful synthesis. It managed to somehow goose them into producing that sort of work which is to me sometimes more important than what his writing was, which was also very good for the time. It was better than good for the time. It was excellent.
CF: Part of Marvel's problem these days is that the non-formula became the formula.
Wolfman: I think the main problem that Marvel has is, since it all came from Stan—Stan and Jack, Stan and Steve...I don't want to eliminate the artists, but if I say Stan please add artist next to it, because up at Marvel the plotting required...that the two work awfully close together...
CF: Is that in itself part of the reason that the books were so popular, that synthesis rather than the writer producing a full script?
Wolfman: I think so. When you're working with somebody who's turned on you're going to get a better project than if you do it all just yourself. The clash of talents brings out a good challenge there. You're each trying to outdo the other.

Wolfman: Yes, but the problem that Marvel faces is that when Stan did it, it was all new, he did it for about ten or twelve years, but he did it all better than it had ever been done. Now everyone is trying to follow—whether or not anyone wants to admit it—that Stan Lee look to the Marvel line. The problem is you can't beat it. You can't get bigger because bigger will just take it away from all reality. What comes after Ego and Galactus? Now what happens is that the differences of approach that DC and the others have come up with are interesting because they are not in the same style all the time.
CF: Certainly there are books that Marvel publishes that bear very little similarity.
Wolfman: I can't think of any. You might be able to.
CF: Certainly **Dreadstar** doesn't seem to be done the same as **Captain America** or.
Wolfman: But they are the same sort of intensity of what Stan had done. It looks like a Marvel comic. That look is now becoming passe because it's been done for so long and it's no longer being done, to my taste, as interestingly. The reason that Frank's stuff—Frank Miller's—the Daredevils was such a departure is because he took the Marvel style in a completely different direction and made it interesting. I very much enjoyed Sterno's (Roger Stern's) **Spiderman** but its still just another Spiderman.



CF: There's the same look to **G.I. Joe, Star Wars** and **Rom?**

Wolfman: Not **Star Wars**, because Archie Goodwin was in charge of that and he completely set the style for

example there, but that's also a licensed item and...

CF: A lot of books today are licensed items

Wolfman: That's the other unfortunate thing, there's no

CF: There seems to be a minimal amount of really new concepts at any of the companies.

Wolfman: I don't know. I disagree there. I think maybe concepts is the wrong word but different approaches. For instance, I very much like **John Sable**. Mike Grell's writing it in a style that's not in any other comic currently.

CF: And yet it's been done so many times before.

Wolfman: That's OK. It isn't being done now.

CF: Is it really different than the **Showcase** issue of Jonny Double?

Wolfman: Maybe not, which I know very well obviously, having been the co-creator of Jonny Double. Comics stagnated to superheroes for so long that something like John Sable is now new again in comic books. It's not new for TV or for movies but it's very well done.

CF: It's new for modern comics but you go back to very early comics and it was the cliche.

Wolfman: It may have been then, but it's not now. Again,

story he's telling but the way he's telling it. I don't want to harp on that one book, because I have nothing at all to do with it besides reading it...but he's doing it well. It doesn't matter if it's an old concept as long as he's doing it well today. Again, almost everything on the market today is superheroes

heroic adventure, is nice

CF: It's a good book, it's an interesting book and there should be more books like that.

Wolfman: I wish there were.

CF: The biggest problem in comics today is that the focus has so narrowed that for all intents and purposes all it produces is superheroes.

Wolfman: Exactly. Completely so in fact. Anything that is selling today is superheroes. I have not seen a major hit that is not superheroes.

CF: That's where I have a problem with Sable in that he has to have a secret identity.

Wolfman: I think what is being done is that they couch it to make it look like a superhero so it will sell. But its not

CF: They still have to put those trappings on.

Wolfman: They put them on to get the readers and then you can ignore it. It's like the Spirit. They put the mask on to get the readers and then you ignore it. He didn't need it,

those things are unimportant as long as the stories are interesting.

CF: Back in the early Sixties, I guess you must have been pursuing your college education.

Wolfman: That was the late Sixties. Mid-Sixties I was in high school. I went to Art and Design High School.

CF: That's when you were pursuing your interest in art?

Wolfman: That's when I also became interested in doing

comedy writing as well. Which I really enjoy doing. Then I went to Queens College where I studied to be an art teacher. I was earning my way through college by doing comics.

CF: Where did you teach?

Wolfman: A school in Patriach Long Island. Don't even ask me how to spell it, I don't remember any more.

CF: Why did you leave teaching?

Wolfman: I was an art teacher for sixth, seventh, and eighth grades which I despised. I was supposed to be a high school teacher, but they hadn't built the high school yet.

CF: That leaves me the obvious question, I guess. Why did you despise it?

Wolfman: Because I was not trained—and did not care to teach 9, 10, 11 and 12 year olds. I had no desire to teach those, nor did I learn how to. I was trained as a high school teacher. There's a big difference between junior high school and high school. Since the high school had not been finished on time, they put me into the junior high school, and I was not prepared for it.

CF: What is the difference?

Wolfman: In the high school, I would have been teaching more drawing and theory than in the junior high school where the kids felt that art was merely a free subject—a free period to take up their time and have fun with.

CF: Why did you leave rather than pursuing a job at the high school level?

Wolfman: I didn't leave. That was the first year that school systems around the country went into desperate trouble and had to cut all the new teachers. In fact, they cut teachers going back two or three years. At the end of the year schools in a sense closed the classroom for about several thousand teachers around the country, and being a new teacher, I was let go. I would have left anyway. I hated it. I always would have preferred being in comics, but I think I did that because my parents wanted me to be a teacher. Civil Service jobs were considered the thing that you did, in my family at least. I did it as a pressure rather than anything I ever wanted to do. My father was a policeman and then he worked for the government so I had very much that attitude behind me. I never really wanted it but I did it. So when they let me go...I would have quit anyway because I was getting sick of it. I mean physically sick. I hated going to the school each day. I don't have patience for that. I don't even have patience for working in an office each day. I like sitting behind the typewriter.

CF: I guess freelancing is definitely designed for your personality.

Wolfman: I'm really not comfortable at conventions or anything. I do it, and I've learned how to do it well, but I don't enjoy the thing at all. Behind the typewriter, I'm very happy. If I never see anyone, I'm even happier.

CF: You prefer communicating through what you write as opposed to communicating directly. Before you entered comics, you became close friends with Len Wein?

Wolfman: Through a letter in **Mystery in Space**, I believe. One of Len's friends saw my letter published there, found out my address through the phone book or something, called me up. Len was living in Levittown as was his friend. So was my sister strangely enough, who I was going to visit the very next day for the weekend. I said, "Well, I'll be in town tomorrow," so Len and his friend rode their bikes over and we became friends from that point on. I guess I was in tenth grade at the time. I don't know thirteen, fourteen years old.

CF: That's interesting because he crops up at a number of critical junctures in your professional career as well.

Wolfman: Well, we've been friends ever since. As I mentioned earlier, we broke into professional comics together and we've worked on very few things together but people seem to associate us together.

CF: What was your first professional sale?

Wolfman: The story in **The Castle of Frankenstein** and then I sold a Blackhawk story to Dick Giordeno. It had been sitting in Dick's desk for a year. He had just gotten there, I had sent it to George Kashdon, who never even opened the envelope. I hated what they had done to Blackhawk—made him into a superhero. The Blackhawks were every boy's fantasy—you could just go into a place and beat up everyone. It was great. It was fascist...I recognized it as a very juvenile attitude, but I was a juvenile. So it was acceptable.

CF: Even in the adult world there are times when that's necessary.

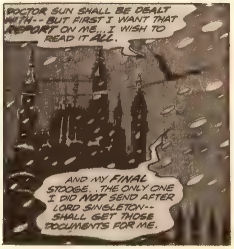
Wolfman: Yeah, but maybe, I don't want to talk politics or anything, I'm not going to...But I really loved the Blackhawks—as badly done as they were. He had really ruined to me the concept of the Blackhawks with the superhero version of it.

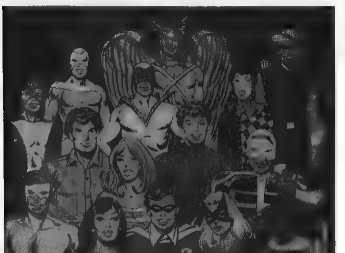
CF: Weren't they sort of floundering and grasping at straws at that point?

Wolfman: Oh, sure. But Murray Boltinoff had done it before him, and even though he changed the costumes, he did some lovely stories. He kept the essence of the Blackhawk.

CF: Yes, but I think it was more than a costume change at that point.

Wolfman: Yeah it was...


DOCTOR SUN SHALL BE DEALT WITH -- BUT FIRST I WANT THAT ARTIFACT ON ME...I WISH TO READ IT ALL.
AND MY FINAL STOOGE...THE ONLY ONE I DID NOT SEND AFTER LORD SINGLETON-- SHALL GET THOSE DOCUMENTS FOR ME.



CF: It was superheroes are selling at this point—let's turn them into superheroes.

Wolfman: I grant that. At the same time I grant that anyone with a little bit more taste could have handled it better.

CF: How would you have turned the Blackhawks into superheroes and done it better?

Wolfman: I wouldn't have. That's my personal thing. The group should have gone back to World War II and been handled as a war book. When I was editing the comic recently, that was the approach I had for it. Anyway, I submitted the script, Dick saw it, read it, bought the plot, had Bob Haney redialogue it. I'm sure my dialogue was atrocious. That was my first real sale.

That was the very first actual sale I had made. Immediately after that Joe Orlando bought...It was strange, Dick bought my plot but not my writing on that one. Joe Orlando bought—had me redialogue somebody else's story. So simultaneously I sold two jobs: one plot only, the other dialogue only. After that, I did Jonny Double with Len and then lots of mystery stories. Lots of romance stories. And **Jerry Lewis**. Tons of things without my name on them. Also the **Teen Titans.**

CF: In their less popular incarnation?

Wolfman: No, actually that was a very popular incarnation. It was their second incarnation that was the less popular one. I worked on their previous run.

CF: Wasn't that one cancelled as well though?

Wolfman: Yes it was, but after 51 issues.

CF: So you also did some what? Some Superman and Batman?

Wolfman: I did only the Tales of Krypton then. Julie never liked my stuff back then. Looking back at my early stories, even the story which I did for him, which has just been reprinted, they were embarrassingly bad. I don't think I started to learn how to write until I worked on Dracula. I did some nice stories previous to that, but I don't think I really learned what I was doing. They were more the exception rather than the rule.

CF: You left DC to go over to Warren as an editor, didn't you?

Wolfman: Yes I did.

CF: Why did you decide to leave DC?

Wolfman: I had become an assistant editor at DC—remember when a 25 cent comic was a big 80 page book?

CF: Oh yes.

Wolfman: It's hard to remember those days. I was Joe Kubert's Assistant Editor and Joe Orlando's Assistant Editor for a while. When DC cancelled all those 25 cent books and cut back the price, they got rid of all the assistant editors at the time. I needed work and all I had was the John Carter strip. I don't think I was handling that all that well. Denny kept me working on that. Denny O'Neil was the editor. I needed full time work and Warren offered me a full time job, so I took it.

CF: What do you think were the comparative strengths of Kubert, Orlando and O'Neil as editors?

Wolfman: Joe Kubert pretty much knew what he wanted and though I disagreed editorially with him, I could never disagree creatively with him. The man is an absolute genius in terms of comic books. I think I learned more from a single story of mine that he drew than I did the four or five years I had been working previously.

CF: What story was that?

Wolfman: I did an opening or something to **Weird War**. He kept all my dialogue exactly as I did it but he repasted my entire story, redid all my scene descriptions and watching what he did taught me how to do storytelling. Of course, the guy is an absolute master at it. Orlando, was great with mystery stuff. He had a little bit of a problem with superheroes, but he was the type that would let you experiment with things a little more than Joe Kubert would. Because Joe was very set on how things should look. Joe Kubert knew exactly what he wanted. Orlando was more willing to experiment with things that weren't in his style. Denny, at that particular time, I think was having some personal problems and was not spending as much time, at least with me, that I needed because my writing was very poor. We all go through those things. I don't know exactly what the situation was. He didn't influence my writing all that much, although I wish he would have because I really enjoyed Denny's writing at the time.

CF: As Assistant Editor, what were your responsibilities at that time? What did an assistant editor at DC do?

Wolfman: I put together all the reprint books, the letter columns. I made sure all the stories were proofread. I did rewriting on some stories, if necessary and if Joe wasn't around the office himself.

CF: Who did you rewrite?

Wolfman: Some of the war stuff. There were occasional times when Russ Heath, who was an artist, was very late, and we'd have nothing in the house and we'd suddenly have to create a Sgt. Rock story out of whole cloth. It was incredible. I'd be rewriting an old story that had nothing to do with Sgt. Rock and Joe would be repairing faces just to get it out in one day. It was an incredible learning experience. With Joe Orlando I actually worked with some writers on plotting and essentially kept the place functioning while

Joe was...because Joe was in the middle of becoming more important in terms of editing for the whole company. He didn't have as much time to work on the superhero books. I never had anything to do with **Swamp Thing** or anything. Joe handled those himself. That was it essentially.

CF: When that ended you went over to Warren. How was that different?

Wolfman: Bill Dubay was the Art Editor and I was the Story Editor. I started to put together books with themes. When the stories finally came in they never put them together as theme books, which was a shame. I was trying to come up with new ways to make the Warren books more attractive. So I would do an all vampire issue beginning with the first vampire story and ending with the last vampire story. All down the line, a werewolf issue, a science fiction issue, things of that sort. I was also pushing at the time to turn **Eerie** into an all-heroes book, which they eventually did do. And I made some other changes up there connecting with Captain Company. We wanted it to have form sheets for instance. They had previously had individual coupons on every ad so that was a waste of space.

CF: I think as an aside we should point out here that Captain Company was an important section of the magazine because through most of the Seventies the actual sales of the copies would not support the company and so it was the merchandising through Captain Company that allowed them to continue it.

Wolfman: I've heard that Warren is going into bankruptcy.

CF: That's what I've been told.

Wolfman: I guess tastelessness doesn't win all the time.

CF: It seems that near the end Warren was almost completely unavailable.

Wolfman: That's what they say. When I was there he was there every day. I have not seen Jim Warren since I left. That was back in 1971.

CF: I think the biggest problem that Warren ran into, and they tried to correct that by putting in poorly crafted color sections and it wasn't enough—was the same thing that the Fass Brothers at Country Wide along with a lot of the other publishers ran into; we're seeing the phasing out of black and white newsprint publishing.

Wolfman: I also think it was because the books were completely tasteless, but that's beside the point.

CF: That doesn't always kill a book.

Wolfman: No it doesn't, but I'm pleased to see that they are no longer on for that. I'm sorry that the company's not there because he had some very good artists and he kept a lot of people working. Which was very important in the comic book field to me. But I will not miss the demise of **1954.**

CF: Did you actually read that thing?

Wolfman: I read the first few issues and then that was the very first time I ever stopped buying a comic book. Because I was collecting for so long, I always had the collecting mentality. As a protest I just stopped buying it. Which was for me almost like giving up a religion or something because I always bought everything. If I bought something, I would continue to buy it forever. That was the very first book I ever gave up because it was utterly and disgustingly tasteless.

CF: Even artists and writers who normally do very nice work were putting garbage in that book.

Wolfman: I guess that proves that there is an adolescent in everybody.

CF: Either that or there is a need for a paycheck for everybody.

Wolfman: No, you can do tasteless...I'm not saying that pornography in its own sense is negative. That was sick stuff. You could do nice sexy stories for an adult audience and it would be a lot of fun and it wouldn't be tasteless, and you could do violent stories for an adult audience and it wouldn't be tasteless, but based on how they managed to sink to the lowest level on everything...

CF: There seems to be a tendency that when you take restrictions and regulations off, the material actually seems to get worse instead of better. I know in working with a number of people I've been told that restrictions provide a framework.

Wolfman: I think that depends on the individual person. For instance taking the restrictions off Frank Miller made **Ronin** and I think that's great. I think whatever may be the fault of the book, creatively it's a step forward as opposed to a step backward.

CF: Why do you consider it a step forward?

Wolfman: Because he's opening up an American comic book market to something different and also as an artist, he's not resting on his laurels. He could have done a copy of Daredevil and it would have sold even better because everyone was waiting for it. He took a chance of alienating everybody by trying to start something so completely alien to anything he had done. He could have flopped completely and he didn't.

CF: Isn't he being very derivitive though of Moebius' style?

Wolfman: As the issues change, I think his own style will be moving as well, and from what I can tell, it is. He's in the process of learning and advancing, he's not stepping back and just doing more of the same. Who knows where he's going to stop as an artist. I'm fascinated by that.

CF: Then you left Warren.

Wolfman: Well, Roy Thomas kept making an offer for me to come over to Marvel. I turned him down the first time because—well frankly Warren kept telling me all these

I'LL REMEMBER THOSE WORDS, TARZOO, BUT I DID NOT UNDERSTAND THEM UNTIL I HEARD THEM AGAIN.
MARIBELLE, MY DEAR? I HAVE YOU FROM THOSE SURROUNDINGS FOR THE MAN WHO WOULD HAVE KILLED YOU.
I, RAISED YOU FROM THOSE SURROUNDINGS FOR YOU AS A FATHER TRAINS HIS DAUGHTER.
MAY YOU CALL ME—MAD!

frightening stories about Roy and I had not known Roy outside of meeting him at a couple of conventions and I was a little bit nervous about going there, I thought I'd be stepped on or whatever. The job at Warren was a lot of fun, I had complete freedom to do what I wanted. Even though the pay was not great, it was a lot of fun to do. At that point I was already writing Dracula and after the first couple of issues I realised Roy was a real nice guy and he wasn't the ogre that Jim was trying to set him up as. So I agreed with Roy the second or third time he offered the job and I was at Marvel for eight years.

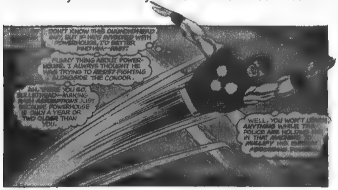
CF: At Marvel you did quite a number of their main characters, but you also brought back **Nova** and created **Skull.** Neither of those books were successful.

Wolfman: Nova was actually—even when it was cancelled it did not sell all that badly, there were books that sold worse. I'm not quite sure why it was cancelled when there were a lot of other titles that were poorer sellers. At the same time that was cancelled so was **Invaders**, I don't know, I'm not sure of the reasons involved for the cancellation. It wasn't selling great, but it wasn't selling horribly either. **Skull** on the other hand, I only did the first couple of issues. The book was never what I intended it to be. I didn't want it to be a superhero book, and that's what it was. That was the only way I could sell it. I didn't want any story more than eight pages, which, of course, Marvel wasn't doing at the time. The concept I had, and still want to do some day, is an entire apartment building vanishing in the present and showing up in the past and each story being about one of the people who lived in the building and how they react to being in this prehistoric time period. Because of the requirements for Marvel at the time, it evolved into this super-hero book that I felt uncomfortable with and got off of as soon as I could, because that concept wasn't really mine.

CF: It literally became a costumed hero book.

Wolfman: Yes it did. I never liked it. I thought the first issue was good but even there it wasn't my concept. I never really cared that much about it. I did **Werewolf** for a while and then, of course, **Dracula**, and **Daredevil,** the **Fantastic Four** and **Spiderman** and tons of others here and there.

CF: When you were doing the **Fantastic Four** and **Spiderman** you were following—obviously some time had elapsed—but you were following on Marvel's two flagship titles. The two titles very much bore the imprint of the original creators. How did you feel approaching those titles? Did you feel that you could move those titles forward and make changes or that you had to retain the original feeling of the book?


DON'T KNOW HOW ANYTHING CAN BUT BY HIMSELF WITH NOWHERE TO BET PATCH-UP JOBS!
CLANCY THINKS ABOUT POWER MORE. I ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS TRYING TO ABSORB PAINTING AND LOOKING THE COLOUR.
BUT YOU CAN BE SURE HE'S BEEN CHANGING HIS ARRANGEMENTS JUST AROUND POWERHOUSE HOUSE OR TWO CLOSER THAN YOU!
WELL IF YOU WON'T LISTEN ANYTHING WHILE I'M IN THE ARMOUR, I'LL JUST GO AND BE ALONE!

Wolfman: I didn't actually want to do **Spiderman** and, as far as I'm concerned, I don't like the issues of the **Fantastic Four** I wrote. I loved the **Spidermans** I did. When I took over **Spiderman**, I reread everything that had come out previous to that. And since I started with issue 187 or something like that you can imagine how long that took to do. I realised one of the things that made it interesting for me in the early days was the constant change. You never knew what was going to happen. So I promised myself that there was going to be a change in almost every issue. Something would happen that the readers would not expect. I came up with a whole list of all the changes, went to Stan, got his OK to make the changes and went right ahead and did it. **The Fantastic Four**, I think the reason that I wasn't very happy with what I did after the Dr. Doom story was that the FF was always done so well under Stan and the only concept that Stan had was that the stories were good. There wasn't anything you could really center on.

CF: The interplay of the characters as a family...

Wolfman: That of course, but I came on after they had split up for the thirty-seventh time.

CF: Byrne has done an interesting play on that. Reed Richards says he and Sue are going to move out into the suburbs and the Torch asks, "Are we going to break up again?" and Reed says, "No, No We've learned that doesn't work."

Wolfman: I hated that. I swore that as long as I was on the book, they would never break up. It's like a family breaking up. I don't think anyone's done it well since Stan and Jack. Spiderman I was able to get into because I really enjoyed the character...I felt totally free to make any changes I felt like in the book. Also, the book really shot up in sales when I took over which really made me feel good.

CF: It seems that the approach to both of those titles is to bring them back to their original form and to try to progress form there. It is what Roger Stern is doing on the Spiderman book and what John Byrne is doing on the Fantastic Four book.

Wolfman: I think Roger is successful. I don't think John is. I think the problem is if you keep going back to the original and try to progress from there you keep covering the same ground. Also there are certain points. Nobody is going to change the character They are not going to be completely different. Peter Parker is still a college student, ex-college student, whatever who sells pictures to the paper and worries about Aunt May and all this stuff. It's essentially the same story forever. The best you could do is good stories. Unless the situation at Marvel changes or Jim Shooter decrees it, I doubt if Peter is ever going to get a full time job or change the fact that he worries about everything. I doubt if that is going to change. So you're forced to follow the same formula more or less. The same on Superman.

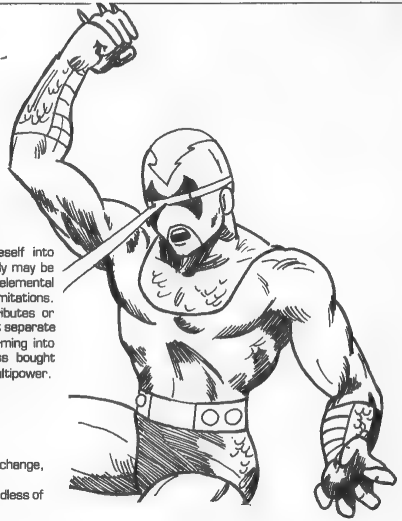
NEXT ISSUE: Marv Wolfman talks about Superman, Night Force, Vigilante, and of course... The New Teen Titans! Plus, the future of comics and much, much more.

Games

Daniel W. Baker

The purpose of this article is to form new powers, skills, limitations and enemies for the various super hero role-playing games.

The items presented in this installment will be presented in the "Champions" form (using their stats and equivalents). Although you should feel free to adjust them to your gaming system.



NEW POWERS

Metamorph: The power to transform oneself into another shape or form. Part or all of the body may be changed. A metamorph may not be put in to an elemental control or a multipower, but is subject to limitations. The power affects appearance only not attributes or abilities. Extra limbs or powers must be bought separate from the metamorph. For instance, transforming into hawk does not give the power to fly unless bought elsewhere. Suggested use with the Variable Multipower.

cost:

100 pts for a single specific change
+ 20 pts for each additional change
400 pts for a multi, non-specific change-any change, any phase
END cost is 20 pts on round of change regardless of cost

Animal Summoning: The power to summon one type of animal. There must be some of that type of animal in the area. It is also limited to the number of the animal around. The summoned animal(s) will do anything the caller wants that is not contrary to its nature. The GM must write down the stats of the animal type. Example: Rat; BODY 5, STUN 15, SPD 10, hand to hand killing attack 1d6.

cost:

25 pts for 1 small animal
50 pts for 1d6 animal
75 pts for 2d6 animals
100 pts for 3d6 animals
END cost is standard

Variable Multipower: This power can be used in a large number of ways. It can be used to fashion powers as you need them (as with the Green Lantern) or to change yourself to what you need (as with the Absorbing Man) or to make powers that fit your Metamorph (as with the Chameleon Boy).

cost:

As with a regular multipower you buy a point reserve and a number of slots at reserve/5 per slot.

Example: A 100 pt reserve with 5 slots would cost 200 pts and you would allow 5 powers at one time for a total of 100 pts active between them.

Deactivation: Any or all powers shut off during use. This is similar to the activation roll except that powers shut off during operation upon injury, under unusual stress, etc.

Shutdown on:

Always shuts down	20 pts per power
14 or less	15 pts per power
9 or less	10 pts per power
5 or less	5 pts per power

Situation:

Common	20 pts total
Uncommon	15 pts total
Rare	10 pts total

POWER LIMITATIONS

Time Lag Activation: For every action round it takes to start to use power + ½ Bonus

Stall Speed: Character must go at least ½ his fastest flying speed to fly + ½ Bonus

NEW VILLAIN

Myron Yicskonoo

An ex-citizen of the planet Lucifer—now an asteroid belt just beyond Mars, he is 6'4" tall with a dark olive complexion. He appears to be human, but is known to be over 20 million years old. His apparent age is about 27. His people have a natural shape-changing ability, but he was certifiably insane and banished to the surface of Mars where he escaped the destruction of his home planet.

Myron has been trying to take control of the planet Earth. He uses an amulet to focus his natural changing abilities. Without it he would take 4 action phases to make one change, but with it he can change every phase if he desires.

VAL	CHA	COST
25	STR	15
33	DEX	69
10	CON	-
15	BODY	10
15	INT	5
10	EGO	-
15	PRE	5
10	COM	-
15	PD	10
12	ED	10
11	SPD	67
7	REC	-
20	END	-
42	STUN	10

cost	powers	END
145	Metamorph 400 active	3
116	Variable Multipower 200 active/3 slots	
10	Acrobatics 21 or less	
5	Security systems 12 or less	
25	+5 skill with multipower	
10	Flight 5"	1
15	3d6 Luck	
30	Damage Resistance	
30	Life Support	

CHA cost—256 powers cost—386
Total cost—642

100+ Disadvantages

15	Greedy
20	Overconfident
10	Public Identity
20	Hunted by FBI, CIA
30	Must eat 1/hour 3d6
10	Hatred of Truth
5	Unusual looks
382	Villain Bonus

James Van Hise

Before Marvel revolutionized comics in the Sixties with the introduction of the **Fantastic Four** and other new and different super-hero books, a small and more sedate, yet just as meaningful, revolution had been slowly taking place at DC Comics.

The Silver Age of comics [which includes what Marvel accomplished in the Sixties], actually began in 1956 with **Showcase #4** [September-October], and the tentative revival of The Flash, the fastest man alive.

The Golden Age of comics had only sputtered out a few years before with the final issue of **All-Star Comics #57** [February-March 1951]. Thereafter it was called **All Star Western** and was an entirely different magazine. So even though DC still had their mainstays in Superman and Batman [as well as their spinoff magazines], super-heroes just weren't very strong in the early Fifties. These were the years when horror ruled the newsstands and even Batman and Superman fought science fiction monsters. During those first five years of the Fifties there were sometimes as many as 500 titles in existence. Crime and Horror ruled the purchasing habits of the comics fans.

But then came the fall. Fly-by-night publishers went out of business overnight, and even the established companies such as EC Comics found it a tough row to hoe. With the exaggerated backlash against horror comics [most of which were dull and not well done anyway], and the introduction of the Comics Code Authority, the good horror comics, like EC, collapsed along with the bad. When the dust settled it was a very different marketplace.

The passage of time alone would have meant that the turnover in readership had begun, even without the upheaval in the marketplace. While DC had never really been a part of the horror trend [the closest they came, in the form of a **Phantom Stranger** comic, lasted only six issues from 52-53], they hadn't really tried to buck it overmuch. Superheroes were on the decline in the early Fifties so they produced various adventure books, westerns, and the rather tame **House of Mystery** and **Strange Adventures.** But now the time seemed right to try something else.

Showcase had only just begun by featuring contemporary adventure strips like **Firefighters** and **The Frogmen**, none of which excited sales enough to appear in more than one issue.

"Then someone, some unknown inspirational genius, suggested that we bring back the Flash," recalled Julius Schwartz, editor of the book. "We decided not to revive the old Flash from the 40s but to modernize him. We got the idea of a new origin, a new costume and a hero who got his inspiration, strangely enough, from reading an old **Flash** comic!" In his origin story, Barry Allen is reading an old **Flash** comic book seconds before a lightning bolt from a raging electrical storm strikes the cabinet in his laboratory and smashes certain chemicals, bathing him in them. The result is the acquisition of superspeed.

Bob Kanigher, one of the writers of the Forties version of The Flash, created some of the personality quirks that helped personify Barry Allen, such as his inevitable lateness in his civilian identity.

Another veteran of the original Golden Age Flash was Carmine Infantino, the artist whose individual style would stamp the strip with its identity throughout the early years of the character's revival and remain as a fond memory until he would at last return to the strip years later.

"Julie called me in one day," Carmine recalled, "and said that we were going to try super-heroes again. We were going to redo the Flash. Kanigher would write it, I would do the pencils and Joe Kubert would ink it. I wasn't thrilled—I never liked doing the super-heroes stuff. But I said Okay and we did it."

And yet Infantino's work showed a real flair for the character, from his design of the new costume down to all of the background details. His work had come a long way from the comparitively crude art he did in the Forties to the highly stylized art style he was still developing even as he began work on the most popular series he would ever draw.

Abandoning the silly idea of a character who wore a helmet which looked like a hubcap with wings, the new Flash was sleek and graceful in design, emphasizing his swift power even when he was standing still.

In creating the character, the name of Barry Allen was taken as a combination of Steve Allen [who was very popular on television at that time] and from a local New York TV personality named Barry Gray.

The origin story, written by Robert Kanigher, has some interesting touches which were pretty much ignored in later stories. These are that The Flash can see things like a bullet moving through the air, but to him they seem to be in slow motion [This creates a paradox because then normal motion would appear extraordinarily slow to him, but that concept is never dealt with]. Unfortunately, the villain used in the origin tale is called the Turtle Man, the slowest man on Earth. He's just an ordinary crook who speaks with pauses in between each word and tricks The Flash a couple times, but otherwise he's just a silly little gimmick of a character.

The second story in **Showcase #4** was written by John Broome and is much more the type of story to which Flash readers would become accustomed as it involves a criminal from the future who is accidentally exiled into our time. He also possesses super speed and is using it to steal items to repair the vessel which brought him here so that he can return to the future and exact revenge. It's a pretty good story although it does possess a rather unsophisticated representation of the time barrier as being something akin to a stone wall which The Flash has to break through. This time barrier also supposedly only exists in moving toward the future, not into the past. Otherwise it's a fine early effort, especially when they were consciously trying for a more modern style of super-hero story of the type which would become commonplace in the Sixties and Seventies but which was still aborning in 1956.

The artwork in the whole issue was drawn by Carmine Infantino and inked by Joe Kubert. Schwartz wouldn't let Infantino ink his own work because he felt the style was then too wild and he didn't like it. Only on Detective Chimp stories and later in **Strange Adventures** on the "Space Museum" stories was Infantino allowed to ink his own work at DC Comics. The inking by Kubert was good but tended to make the linework more Kubert's then Infantino's by the time it was finished.

Sales reports take time to come in, but when it became clear that the sales were up for **Showcase #4**, The Flash was slotted into #8, which would appear eight months after his initial tryout. His second appearance introduced Capt. Cold, who would be the first in a long line of recurring foes. Leonard Snart's power, like many of The Flash's villainous foes is through a super-scientific ability, in this case a sub-zero, high-pressue cold gun capable of creating all manner of icy effects. Capt. Cold made further appearances in issue numbers 114, 129, 134, 140, 150, 155, 166, 174 [Infantino's last issue in his first run as Flash artist], 193, 226 and more. When Infantino returned to The Flash in 1981, Capt. Cold was in the second issue he drew, #297.

Many of The Flash's villains are unusual, but Al Desmond, alias Mr. Element, was something else again. Fascinated by elements, he used them to aid him in committing crimes until the Flash outfoxed him, but he was not so easily beaten. In **Showcase #14** he returned as Dr. Alchemy as he had found the fabled

SECONDS LATER, HE IS STREAKING ACROSS THE HARBOR WATERS IN THE WAKE OF A FAST-MOVING SURFBOARD...
THERE HE IS NOW! HE ROBBED THAT YACHT AND IS CARRYING OFF HIS LOOT IN A BIG DITTY BAG!

Philosopher's Stone which enabled him to turn anything to gold. It makes one wonder why he bothered going back to robbing banks. Desmond, like the later villain the Heat Wave, repented his actions and tried to go straight, but things kept going wrong. In #147 he was forced to return to active duty by the mind control of the Reverse Flash [who was accidentally killed by The Flash quite recently in #324], in order to purify an element which would restore his super-speed powers. Mr. Element also appeared in numbers 153 and 216 while Dr. Alchemy donned his robes in #230.

The Flash was gifted with his own magazine at about X-mas 1959, several months after **Showcase #14** appeared. **Flash #105** [February-March 1959] continued the numbering of the original **Flash Comics,** picking up exactly ten years after #104 appeared. The main reason it continued the old numbering was for the purpose of second class mailing requirements which otherwise required the posting of a bond when a new title is granted these privileges. William Gaines did this in the early Fifties when he changed the title of a magazine but retained the same numbering to make things easier on himself, but sometimes he was caught. In DC's case they had no trouble since they were just continuing an old title now updated, although the character was only superficially the same.

Flash #105 had another John Broome SF tale involving Flash confronting an alien being, only this one was from our distant past. The back-up story introduced Samuel Scudder, the Mirror Master, another villain who employed super-scientific devices to bedevil the scarlet speedster. But unlike Capt. Cold, the Mirror Master could accomplish much more with his devices, and eventually even learned of a "mirror

world" he could escape to safety in. But he became bored there and longed for the challenge of combat with his nemesis The Flash. His other initial appearances were in numbers 109, 119 [an especially good one, inked by Murphy Anderson], 126, 130, 136, 146, 155, 161, 174, 188, 206, 219, and 231.

Flash #106 did something unusual. It began a trilogy of stories featuring Grodd, the super gorilla. A rogue intellect of the secret Gorilla City located somewhere in Africa, Grodd is determined to use his superior mind to control all other living creatures. In three separate adventures in numbers 106-108, Flash defeats three remarkable schemes in stories which bristle with John Broome's science fiction wizardry, ably abetted by the imaginative manifestations of Carmine Infantino and Joe Giella. In later years Giella's inks would become looser and less refined, but in these early years his work and Infantino's were at the top of their form. When it came to super-scientific devices, Infantino was to DC what Jack Kirby was to Marvel.

The most popular team in comics in the early Sixties was DC's pairing of penciller Carmine Infantino with inker Murphy Anderson [although Anderson was also a superb penciller and

inker in his own right as evidenced by his popular Capt. Comet series in the Fifties **Strange Adventures** and The Atomic Knights which appeared in the early Sixties in that same title). Infantino and Anderson did the majority of their most famous work together on the Adam Strange series in **Mystery In Space.** But occasionally during the time he'd ink a story for **The Flash,** although most of these appeared in the title during 1960 and 61. As nice as Infantino's art was under other inkers, Anderson added a smooth elegance which enhanced the super-realism of Infantino's pencils. Infantino did his best work on science fiction and The Flash was a super-hero strip which dripped with science fiction accoutrements at every opportunity.

Flash #110 introduced Kid Flash, who until #135 looked like just a miniature Flash because his costume was identical. Wally West, Iris West's young nephew, is introduced to Barry Allen who arranges for Wally to meet The Flash. In the coincidence to end them all, just as Flash is explaining the strange circumstances which gave him his powers, a lightning bolt crashes through the window, hits a cabinet of chemicals behind Wally and bathes him in certain ones. As the Flash thought at the time, "It

seems Fantastic!", and he was right. Kid Flash was used to better effect than one might imagine in some book length adventures in issues 120, 125 and 135 as well as later stories. His solo adventures in numbers 111, 114 and 116 were very low key in comparison to Flash stories and weren't at all satisfying. The character of Kid Flash seen now in **The Teen Titans** has come a long way since the 1960 issue of **The Flash**, and if we're to believe how comics reckon time, he's only aged six years. We all should be so lucky.

Elliot S. Maggin once said that DC tends to take themselves much more seriously than Marvel does, and yet DC has a history of producing some of the silliest covers on comics. If it isn't The Trickster escaping Flash on a tricycle on the cover of #142, then it's something like that oft-cited classic #115, "The Day Flash Weighed 1,000 Pounds!" The cover is silly enough but the splash page is a real howler. We see the Flash, weighing only slightly less than the Goodyear blimp, facing down a man who holds a strange device. "If you think you're fat now, Flash—watch what this gimmick does to you next! It'll blow you up so much, you'll explode!" To which the Flash fearlessly replies, "You'll never get the chance, Dawson —not with this hat pin weapon of mine!" It's really hard getting people to take comics seriously when they see something like this. It just confirms all their worst suspicions.

Oddly enough, the story by John Broome is very good, and would have been even better if the fatso gimmick hadn't been tossed in. Believe-it-or-else, this is a Gorilla Grodd story. In his inescapable prison in Gorilla City, Grodd has faced the fact that he can not escape. So devising a pill from the chemical elements in the earth at his feet, he takes it, knowing that it will kill him but will also transmit his mind into that of another living being. There is a chance that it might be a lower form of life in whose body he'd be helpless, but he takes the risk...and winds up in the body of one William Dawson, a transient just arrived in Central City, hometown of The Flash. Dawson turns a weapon on Flash which draws moisture from the air around him and increases his weight dramatically. Dawson uses the last of his Grodd super mental powers to wipe The Flash's memory away, but he regains it later and enters the dehydrating room at an instant potato factory to lose his excess weight. The secret behind the splash page is that this works and when The Flash faces Dawson he pretends to still be grotesquely fat by having pumped his uniform full of air, which is released by the hatpin.

Some of the people who were reading and appreciating **Flash** during these early, wild days, and who had letters printed in the lettercol, **Flash-Grams,** include one Roy Thomas (in numbers 116 and 120) and Tom Batiuk of **Funky Winkerbean** fame in #121.

One of the real treats for Flash fans in those early days was **Flash Annual #1** published in the Summer of 1963. It helped awaken the incipient collector in me by printing a complete index to the new Flash on the inside back cover which listed all the showcase issues and gave titles, art and story credits for numbers 105-140. It presented a tangible goal to pursue, as well as what was, at that time, rare behind-the-scenes information.

There was more testing and experimentation going on in **The Flash** from 1959-1963 than in any other DC hero title like this. We saw the introduction of Kid Flash, Elongated Man (in #112, April-May 1960), and in #123, "Flash of Two Worlds," which ushered in the gradual revival of all of DC's Golden Age regulars. The two Flashes reteamed periodically thereafter, most notably in numbers 129 and 137 (the latter actually featuring the Justice Society of America in a small supporting role). The Flash even began doing crossovers with our Green Lantern, #131 being the first to transpire in **The Flash** magazine.

The Earth-Two stories, involving the alternate world super-heroes such as

LIFE RETURNS TO NORMAL FOR POLICE SCIENTIST BARRY ALLEN, FOR THE REST OF THE DAY HE BUSIES HIMSELF WITH OFFICIAL TASKS--THEN WORKS OVER-TIME ON A PERSONAL MATTER...
AS BARRY ALLEN, I'LL GIVE THE FLASH A HELPING HAND BY PREPARING SOME SPECIAL GIMMICK OF MY OWN TO NEUTRALIZE THOSE HE'S DEVISED TO STOP ME!

the Golden Age Flash, were written in the beginning by Gardner Fox. One of his best was #137, the book length story "Vengeance of the Immortal Villain," which introduced us to Vandal Savage, a character who continues to provide fascination for readers today, twenty years after he was reintroduced. Note his unusual appearance on Earth One in Marv Wolfman's Superman stories recently.

But issue #139 presented the character who would change Flash's life, more than once—Professor Zoom, the Reverse Flash. When a capsule is projected into the future containing items from our era, including an old uniform used by The Flash, a criminal uses 25th century technology to amplify the superspeed wave patterns left over in the uniform so that when he dons it he acquires the powers of The Flash. The real Flash destroys this property of the uniform later but Professor Zoom continues to escape and regain his powers in one way or another. In **Flash #275** he murders Iris West and Flash later maroons him in a strange, hostile dimension. But Zoom escapes and in #323 and #324 they have their ultimate super-speed confrontation.

The Flash has had more than his share of problems over the years. In #167 some strange Woody Allen-like imp named Mopee claimed that he was actually responsible for giving The Flash his powers in a story called, "The Real Origin of The Flash," and we were led to believe that this was no joke! How could one give any serious consideration to The Flash after this? Who could get excited reading the adventures of a character who got his powers from Woody Allen? But thankfully, story developments in **Justice League of America #59** supported Flash's origin as told in **Showcase #4** and basically made #167 into some sort

of hoax. I recall at the time it was published in 1969 that many fans considered **Flash #167** to be one of the most insulting comics ever written.

Flash (as Barry Allen) married Iris West in #165 but did not reveal his secret identity to her until #174. But it turned out that she already knew because Barry talks in his sleep! For some reason, DC decided that in #203 they'd reveal that Iris actually came from 1000 years in the future. It seemed like an idea brought in from left field, as though The Flash could not be allowed to marry a normal woman.

Carmine Infantino stopped drawing **The Flash** with issue #174, but even before this his work looked as though he were tiring of the strip. Flash was ballooning into odd proportions and even Murphy Anderson's inking on occasional covers couldn't straighten things out. Sid Greene's inking of Infantino's work at this time just seemed to accentuate his flaws, so that when he did give up the strip his departure was anti-climactic.

But the memories remained. There were fifty or so good issues left to pour over of fine Infantino work, and nostalgia is a powerful intoxicant.

Most of the issues from #175-295 were drawn by Irv Novick, and even though he drew far more issues than Infantino [although Carmine is catching up fast], his work just never succeeded in capturing the grace and artistry inherent in The Flash concept.

There were some issues of note in this period, such as #197 by Gil Kane and #206, which although pencilled by Novick was inked by Murphy Anderson and in some panels captured the atmosphere of those early days. But even with a dynamite cover by Neal Adams on #246 or Flash going crazy over the death of Iris in #276 where he took on the entire Justice League, it just wasn't the same. Carmine Infantino had left comics and gone on to be publisher of DC.

But then something happened. Infantino was replaced after several years in that lofty position and once more he was drawing comics. It took awhile but in 1981 he returned to the Flash. There have been ups and downs but over all it's been a very interesting reunion. Special high points have been #300, where both we and Barry Allen were damn near convinced that he'd hallucinated his existence as The Flash, and #309 which read for all the world like one of John Broome's old Flash stories such as he might have written back in 1961. Cary Bates has done a fine job with the modern Flash, even though some of the continued stories seemed to stretch out a bit longer than necessary, such as The Eradicator saga.

In many ways **The Flash** comic has come full circle, but with the death of Professor Zoom saga set to run for a year from #323, as The Flash is accused of murder and brought before the Justice League, the future of this character seems wide open again.

LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

By Ron Goulart

THE QUALITY GANG PART 2

In 1940 three more titles were added to the Quality Comics line and a batch of new heroes and heroines showed up on the rapidly crowding newsstands. Among them were the first of the super patriots, as well as a gent who could fly like a bird, a cartoonist detective, a lady cop and the first and only female impersonator in comic books.

When the explosively titled **Crack Comics** showed up in the spring of the year [cover dated May 1940], it was a magazine that still had one foot in the reprint camp. Along with the original material you also got Jane Arden [paper dolls included], Ned Brant and Rube Goldberg's Side Show. The intended star of the book, the Clock, was also something of a retread, having already appeared in several magazines. We talked about his earlier career as a dapper masked detective in our last installment's section on **Feature Comics**.

The brand new features included The Space Legion, The Red Torpedo and Wizard Wells. Paul Gustavson contributed Alias the Spider, dealing with an archer who fought crime and lawlessness "with his deadly bow." Johnny Devlin and Gill Fox provided the comedy fillers. Devlin's Molly the Model was a somewhat more sedate predecessor of Torchy and she managed to spend considerable time in her lingerie. Fox drew Slap Happy Pappy, a feature which mixed hillbilly characters with fantasy situations.

The most unusual strip in the magazine was Madam Fatal. Drawn by Art Pinajian, this one dealt with a fellow who fought crime while dressed up as a little old lady. Famous character actor Richard Stanton originally gets himself up as a granny type so he

can track down the man who kidnapped his daughter. After catching him, though, Stanton is reluctant to drop the role. "The actor's disguise of Madam Fatal has served its purpose, but this is not enough," he confides to his parrot. "For I've decided that as Madam Fatal I'll go on fighting crime and lawlessness as long as I can!!" At the time I originally encountered the character, at the innocent age of seven, it didn't strike me as especially odd or unusual. All sorts of comic book heroes were dressing in unusual ways. Bruce Wayne dressed up as a bat, for instance, and Carter Hall went around disguised as a gigantic hawk. So the fact Richard Stanton liked decking himself out as a little old lady didn't seem to make him especially conspicuous. And even now I doubt Pinajian was trying to do something especially unconventional. Probably he, or his script writer, had been impressed by Lon Chaney's little old lady disguise in **The Unholy Three** (1930) or by Lional Barrymore doing a similar turn in **The Devil Doll** [1936]. Madam Fatal finally hung up his skirt after twenty two cases.

The chap who became the closest thing **Crack** had to a leading character in its first two years made his debut in a six page story at the back of the book. Little Richard Grey Junior and his folks are trekking across Outer Mongolia one day when their party is attacked by dread Yakki raiders. They wipe out archeologist Grey, Sr, his wife and everybody except baby Richard. Fortunately for the child, he is adopted by a maternal condor. Raised by birds to young manhood, he naturally develops a strong desire to match his peers and fly. "The first failure only sharpens his desire to fly...He puts his keen mind to the task of studying the movements of wings, the body motions, air currents, balance and levitation...At last his determination is rewarded by success!!" After mastering the art of flying, Richard encounters an old hermit named Father Pierre, who teaches him speech and other essential human skills. When the good father expires, Richard decides to go out into the world to use his gift of flight to help mankind. "And the years following...are filled with his name. Across the East and over the Continent sweeps a mighty figure—The Black Condor!! Terror of the outlaw...suspected by the authorities, he wages a relentless war on evil in his own manner." The Black Condor's costume is dark blue and includes a cape that can be made to look like wings. Early in his career he picked up a formidable black ray pistol, but we're never told where it came from.

America became the Condor's main stomping ground fairly soon and

before his first year as a hero was over he'd taken on a new civilian identity. After crusading US Senator Tom Wright is murdered, the Condor assumes his identity. This isn't too difficult since, "It's amazing! He looks exactly like me!" His principal antagonist from then on is the sinister "political and industrial tyrant" named, aptly, Jasper Crow. The Condor also puts a stop,in the December, 1941 issue, to a Nazi plot to replace Franklin Delano Roosevelt with a pro-Axis imposter.

The most attractive thing about the Black Condor was not the basic concept, the paranoid plots or the exclamatory dialogue. It was the art work of Lou Fine. Still under the spell of illustrators like J.C. Leyendecker and Dean Cornwell, the young Fine turned out one of the best looking costumed hero features of the day. His figure work was exceptional, his settings, whether gloomy Puritanian castles, Hindustan bazaars or about-to-be-sabotaged American industrial plants, were always impressive. Fine also seems to have thought about what a man would look like if he actually could fly. His Condor pages are filled with awesome shots of his hero swooping diving, soaring. Fine, with some help from Charles Sultan and Bob Fujitani, turned out Black Condor episodes for a little over two years. For the Condor's last half dozen or so flights, John Cassone, Sultan, John Belfi and Rudy Palais took turns. For some reason Fine never drew a cover for **Crack**. The Black Condor was most often rendered on covers by Fine's good friend Gill Fox.

By the time the Condor was grounded, after issue #31 (October 1943), he was once again a second banana and a new superguy had been brought in as **Crack Comics'** leading man. Captain Triumph first appeared in #27 (January 1943), just about the only superhero created by an established newspaper strip artist; Alfred Andriola was between strips when he did Triumph. His **Charlie Chan** had ended in may of 1942, his **Kerry Drake** wouldn't get rolling until the fall of 1943. He filled in the time by drawing **Dan Dunn** in its final days and turning out six episodes of the Captain Triumph saga. The captain was actually two people, twin brothers with the catchy names Michael and Lance Gallant. Michael is killed in an explosion rigged by saboteurs. His spirit, however, comes back and offers the surviving twin the opportunity to become a superhero. "I can make you invisible! You shall fly through space within seconds! Nothing physical will harm you! All you need do, Lance, is rub the birthmark on your wrist...Whenever you rub it, I will enter your body and you will become CAPTAIN TRI—UMPH." Lance accepts the proposition, delivered amidst much thunder and lightning. He rubs his wrist and becomes Captain Triumph, his costume a red T-shirt and spotless white riding breeches. He was, incidently, one of the few blond supermen to be found in the comic books of the day.

Andriola did some interesting work on the feature, experimenting with novel layouts and pitting Triumph against villains inspired by the best movie heavies (including Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet). Captain Triumph had several other interesting artists rendering his doings in his six year career. Alex Kotsky drew him on **Crack** covers, Mort Leav and Reed Crandall were among those who took care of the interior art chores.

Crack, going from monthly to bimonthly to quarterly and back to bimonthly again, limped along until the fall of 1949. By then interest in costumed heroes had waned and the magazine was transformed into a cowboy comic. As **Crack Western**, featuring such sagebrush characters as Two-Gun Lil and Arizona Ames, it carried on into 1953.

QUICKSILVER
KID PATROL
SALLY O'NEIL

The first issue of **National Comics,** appropriately enough, had a cover date of July 1940. Its star, billed on the cover as "America's Greatest Comic Character," stepped right out of political cartoons and recruiting posters and into his first adventure. The contents of **National** came from the Eisner-Iger shop and Eisner himself drew the "9 action packed pages" that introduced Uncle Sam in the somewhat unusual role of superhero. Uncle Sam steps into an unlikely plot that has dustbowl migrants being duped into joining a fascist group called the Purple Shirts. He's rather folksy in his first go-round, spouting lines like, "Y'see, I've been around this country a long time, and I reckon the principles our forefathers died for are worth preserving and fighting for!" The story winds up with a battle in which the real fascists are defeated and then "the firing ceases...the Americans haul down the dictator flag, and Old Glory is run up, the strains of the 'Star Spangled Banner' floats [sic] from the fort..." Uncle Sam has teamed up with an orphan lad named Buddy this episode and in his final panel, with Buddy sitting piggyback on his shoulders, he turns to us to say, "Well, readers, it appears I've an assistant who will share my adventures, and I'll bet right now there will be a mighty excitin' ones."

In those bygone days, when nine pages was considered a lot of space to devote to just one character, a good many different features could get stuffed into your average sixty-four page funny book. Besides Uncle Sam, the first issue of **National** offered such strips as 'Prop' Powers, featuring a daredevil pilot; Sally O'Neil, concerning a pretty brunette policewoman; Kid Dixon, a rural lad who becomes a boxing champ; Merlin the Magician, which dealt with an idle playboy who inherits the cloak of the original Arthurian Merlin and becomes a dedicated supermagician; Wonder Boy, who comes to Earth "from the vacuous depths of outer space" and uses his "strength of a thousand men" to do business as a pintsize superhero; Pen Miller, starring a "famous comic magazine cartoonist who is also an amateur detective of wide reputation; Kid Patrol, an Our-Gang-fights-crime sort of thing.

The art chores shifted as the magazine progressed, with various cartoonists taking turns on various features. Among those whose work showed up in **National's** first year were Klaus Nordling, George Tuska, Nick Cardy, John Celardo and Reed Crandall. Jack Cole undertook a one page filler devoted to a champion liar named Windy Breeze. With issue #12 [June 1941) Fred Guardineer took over Merlin and the moustached magician began spelling his magic commands backwards in the manner of Zatara—"Krahs-emoceb a odeproT!" I think the reason I never, as a kid, could work any satisfactory magic this way is because of the difficulty of pronouncing the words once you reverse them.

Quicksilver, the magazine's resident speed demon, came along in the fifth issue. Billed as the Laughing Robin Hood, he wore a costume that made him look like a cross between a ballet dancer and Douglas Fairbanks, Sr's. silent-movie Zorro. One of the earliest artists to work on the strip was Nick Cardy and, for some reason, his name stayed on for the next several years no matter who actually drew it. In #13 Jack Cole had a turn, enlivening things a great deal and filling his six pages with the same effective and eccentric layouts he was gracing **Midnight** and **Plastic Man** with. Paul Gustavson took over with the next issue. Although not quite the artist Cole was, Gustavson brought considerable enthusiasm to the job. His Quicksilver really moved. Quicksilver was, by the way, one of those underprivileged heroes who never had an origin or a civilian identity.

Uncle Sam bowed out of **National** after #45 [December 1944). By that time there had been quite a few changes in the rest of the magazine's cast. Merlin, Wonder Boy, Prop Powers and the Kid Patrol had departed. Pen Miller had moved over to **Crack**. A fellow known only as the Unknown had signed on ["He is a man who appears and disappears with the stealth and silence of a jungle cat, wherever Villainy dares rear its head..."] and specialized in waging guerilla warfare against the Nazis in

occupied Europe. Another wartinged strip was Destroyer 171, drawn originally by Alden McWilliams.

Supplanting Uncle Sam as the star of the magazine was an unusual character called the Barker, who debuted in #42 and stayed on until the end (June 1949). Written at the start by Joe Millard and drawn by Jack Cole, The Barker dealt with the adventures of Carnie Calahan and his coworkers in Colonel Lane's Mammoth Circus. As the circus traveled around the country Carnie and company encountered mystery, murder, all sorts of crime and conniving and a good deal of fantastic goings on. Klaus Nordling took over the strip, doing an excellent job on what was a fairly different comic book character.

Hit Comics, which arrived in the same month as **National**, never lived up to its name. There were a dozen new characters in the first issue and not one was a potential winner. The best thing was the striking action-packed cover by Lou Fine, who, unfortunately, had nothing to do with the magazine's interior pages. Klaus Nordling provided a first-rate adventure-comedy strip that teamed a belligerent sailor with an equally feisty Marine. Bob and Swab was well drawn and brightly written, but not the type of feature that could woo and win an audience eager for supermen.

The actual costumed heroes that **Hit** had to offer were a sorry lot, apparently gleaned from the bottom of the Eisner-Iger barrel (or possibly from underneath it).

The lead off story dealt with a blond chap called Hercules. Drawn by Dan Zolnerowich, the strip was an uneasy mix of adventure and satire. Introduced with the blurb, "He didn't come from another planet...He wasn't made by a mad scientist or by some other fantastic manner...He's a real American youth, born in the North Woods and imbued with the greatest strength mortal man ever possessed," the first yarn shows us how Hercules [full name Joe Hercules] gets his inspiration to become a superhero by reading about Doll Man in **Feature Comics**. Hercules wasn't too imaginative when it came to concocting a costume, opting for just a pair of blue swim trunks, boots and a cape. Although the stories didn't improve much, the art made a leap ahead when Reed Crandall took over toward the end of Herc's first year in business.

The character Quality seemingly hoped would do for **Hit** what Superman had done for **Action** was a ripoff of a ripoff. Originally there was a radio masked man named the Green Hornet, who demonstrated that if you took a color word and the name of an insect you had a name for a mystery man. Using that principle, the Eisner-Iger shop came up with the Blue Beetle, drawn by Charles Nicholas, for **Mystery Man Comics**. Next they achieved the Red Bee, drawn by Charles Nicholas, for **hit**. Perhaps the degree of seriousness involved in this latter venture is best indicated by the penname stuck on the strip, B.H. Apiary. Once I found out what an apiary was I concluded the gentleman's initials stood for Bee Hive.

In real life the Bee was Rick Raleigh, an assistant DA in crime-ridden Superior City. Impatient with the law, he decides to undertake a "one man fight on crime." Possibly the dippiest thing about his costume, which included tights striped like twin barber poles, was the belt he wore. Concealed in the buckle was a trained bumble bee, who came buzzing out on cue to sting evildoers.

THE UNCANNY CLAREMONT

It goes without saying that the cottage industry consisting of the various related X-Men inspired titles is the most popular in comic books today. The single individual most responsible for the success and quality of these books is Chris Claremont. His tight-pacing, careful plotting and interesting character development has caught the imagination and affection of a whole generation of comic book readers. In this interview we will explore the development of Claremont the writer and, hopefully, in the process, illuminate something of Claremont the man.

CF: The best place to start is at the beginning, I guess I'll start by asking when you first became interested in reading fiction.

Claremont: When I first began to read. When I was a child...Kipling, various British authors. A.J. Ranson, Dickens when I was older.

CF: At what age did you start reading Kipling?

Claremont: My father used to read it to me when I was a baby, and I started reading it myself when I was, I don't know maybe five, six.

CF: Which stories?

Claremont: Top of Boots Hill, things like that.

CF: Did you read his ballads or just his stories?

Claremont: No, my father has a complete collection, and I went through the whole thing as is it more than once. Mills, Carol, things like that.

CF: This is before you started reading comics I would imagine.

Claremont: I didn't start reading comics until I was a teenager.

CF: Do you think starting with this type of reading matter affects the way you approach writing a story today?

Claremont: I would assume it has to. A writer is a sum total of all the influences that affect his or her life. The experiences in ones life, the material one reads, all goes into the mix, it's reflected in the work itself.

CF: Do you occasionally write something and then realize it's almost a specific repostulation of an earlier work?

Claremont: Of mine or someone elses?

CF: Of something you've read at an early age.

Claremont: You mean, have I plagiarized?

CF: I don't mean in a sense you've plagiarized but that you've absorbed concepts as you read them and they reemerge to the surface unconsciously.

Claremont: In terms of scenes?

CF: I don't mean specifically scene for scene. I mean in terms of general concept or type of design.

Claremont: I would like to think that would like the material I do to be my own. If there are influences, those are generally for other people to find. It's possible, I just haven't looked. It would require an in-depth examination of what I've done, and what I'm doing, which I simply don't have time to do. I'm too busy creating work or atop and analyze it, to look at it objectively.

CF: When you entered school did you find that you were introduced to material there that encouraged or discouraged your reading?

Claremont: Generally, I read about two or three years ahead of my class, which generally created more problems then it was worth. The idea of being a round peg in a square hole so to speak. You are expected to follow a certain curriculum and no one is especially pleased to find that you are many months or years ahead of them. Especially since that results in you being somewhat uninterested in the class at hand. If you've already read the material—if the material is old hat—then it tends to lead to boredom. Boredom tends to be frowned upon by teachers.

CF: Do you think that type of pressure caused you to internalize and become a writer?

Claremont: No.

CF: That type of alienation seems to be common to artists and writers and creative people.

Claremont: It may be. Again that's an element of introor extro-spection that I really haven't indulged in. I'm not really at this stage interested in why I am. I accept that I am and try to deal with that as best that I can.

CF: What led you to read comics?

Claremont: As a child, through my relatives in England I received a subscription to a tabloid comic called **Eagle**, which at the time was probably the finest collection of graphic art available in Europe on a regular basis. The kind of place where you could regularly see Frank Hampton or Frank Bellamy doing all kinds of fantastic work. The magazine had one photographic color plate every week. So you had the front and back pages and the center spread in full color. The color—we can't even begin to approach today. It was phenomenal. It was...when it was good, it was superb! It was about 1960-1963 and of course, a kid needs something to do while loafing around the barbershop waiting for his turn. They invariably had among the magazines, scores of comic books. So I would sit around and read them.

CF: Which American comics did you begin reading first?

Claremont: Oh, god, only knows. All manner of crazy books. The barbershop...the barber wasn't very particular what he had, he just dumped a stack on the table.

CF: Any one make a particular impression?

Claremont: Not really.

CF: Did you find any particular writer of particular interest?

Claremont: No. Not in comics.

CF: You also probably read science fiction?

Claremont: In those days.

CF: What authors there drew your attention?

Claremont: Heinlein, Norton, Arthur Clarke, John Brunner, Tony Boucher, and that was basically where everything started.

CF: Did any particular story have an impact, a lasting impact on the way...

Claremont: In terms I suppose of stories fondly remembered. **Have Spacesuit Will Travel, Citizen Of The Galaxy, The Witch World** series, **The Fall of Moondust, The Fall of Night, Child of Zen.** Brunner's work Zanzibar and Zanzibar and **Jagged Orbit** are later. I'd have to go back and check my bookcase. And Burroughs of course.

CF: I noticed that in Kipling and Heinlein and Norton and a number of others, which were apparently early influences, they always have a very strong, heroic protagonist and in a lot of the stories you've written, you've utilized a lot of the same character type.

Claremont: In a sense that they are reflections of the same basic pattern. I mean, what Heinlein was doing and Andre Norton, were writing heroic fiction...Strong dynamic types, male/female, positive/negative. That's what a comic book basically is. The idea is to create strong

Stan Lee presents

THE UNCANNY X-MEN!

LEN WEIN WRITER & EDITOR & DAVE COCKRUM ILLUSTRATOR / GLYNIS WEIN COLORIST / JOHN COSTANZA LETTERER

- CO-CREATORS -

SECOND GENESIS!

SPECIAL EDITION X-MEN™ Vol. 1, No. 1, February, 1983. Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP. James E. Galton, President. Stan Lee, Publisher. Michael Hobson, Vice-President, Publishing. Milton Schiffman, Vice-President, Production. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Reprints copyright © 1975 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. Copyright © 1982. All rights reserved. Price $2.00 per copy in the U.S. and $2.25 in Canada. Printed in Canada. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. All prominent characters featured in this issue, and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP.

HEAR ME, I KILL!
YOU'RE NOT KILLING ANYONE, CREEP!
I'VE HEARD ABOUT YOU, SCAVENGER. YOU'VE KILLED LITTLE GIRLS BEFORE, HAVEN'T YOU?!
HAVEN'T YOU??

definitive, fundamental images: good, bad...whatever.

CF: In your work though, the idea of heroism and loyalty seem to be present where a number of comic book writers seem to denigrate those qualities.

Claremont: Well, they're them, and I'm me.

CF: I noticed that these authors you mentioned, particularly ,say Heinlein or Kipling tend to elevate those qualities...That's why I was asking before if the pattern of what you read has an effect on the way you do materiel.

Claremont: That is why I said that that is more easily judged from the outside. When one is actually in the process of creating work, it's impossible to step back and say, well, are my influences coming from this and this. If I went away for a year, didn't look at anything I wrote and then came back...but then I would not be doing it. To me, doing it is of primary importance. I'm not, at this stage, that interested in analyzing it.

CF: What made you decide to write comic books as opposed to novels or short stories or television or anything else?

Claremont: Luck more than anything else. I never intended to be a professional writer full time in the first place. My initial ambition...my major in college was international relations. My ambition was to become a diplomatist to go to the State Department...play with reality. From there I went into acting. I figured that's what I would spend the rest of my life doing with a little writing on the side. What happened was that after I moved to New York, writing began paying more money and more often and Marvel began buying my stuff more often then anyone else. One thing led to another. I discovered I had a knack for it.

CF: When you were in college did you develop a particular world view?

Claremont: No, more of an ability to analyze existing trends, existing patterns, to look at it and see what's happening, try to anticipate.

CF: Did you actually begin to work in the area of political science?

Claremont: You mean in terms of getting jobs?

CF: Yes.

Claremont: No.

CF: Did you do any volunteer work of that type?

Claremont: Only in the Mobe.

CF: Your first professional work then would have been as an actor?

Claremont: Yes.

CF: What was that?

Claremont: Off off-Broadway, New York and regional theatre.

CF: Any particular roles?

Claremont: Not really. It was mostly experimental productions, things that lasted six weeks and then disappeared into the ether. Some walk on work on Edge of Night.

CF: I find it interesting that the authors you're interested in, Heinlein and Kipling, would seem to give you a different influence than the Mobilization Committee would.

Claremont: No, its...at the time it seemed the right thing to do. The war. As far back as high school I couldn't see any justification or logic for it. As a matter of fact, my senior year thesis was based on...well my contention was

THE APACHE WERE MEANT TO BE HUNTERS, WARRIORS-- NOT BAD-ASS EMPERING GRUNTS.
THEY WERE MEANT TO RUN FREE THRU THE CRISP PLAINS GRASSES, THE WIND BLOWING WILDLY THRU THEIR HAIR.
CHUCK NORRIS COULD STAND SOLID TO THE APACHE!
THE ARROW THAT CONVERTED THESE PLAINS FULL LINE MAN BEFORE APACHE STEEL, APACHE BRAVERY!
...BUT NEVER DID ANY BITCH FALL LIKE-- THIS!
THESE HORNED ONES-- DO YOU SEE?
THERE IS STILL A MAN AMONG THE APACHE!
THOOM!

that there was no rational justification for the United States presence in Vietnam. My teacher and I got into a delicious argument over it.

CF: Were you opposed to the war in the sense of the United States' presence or were you opposed to war in the sense of war itself?

Claremont: At the time, in a purely clinical appraisal of the situation, it was to my admittedly arrogant eighteen-year-old mind, the wrong war at the wrong place, the wrong time with the wrong people, to paraphrase someone out of the Korean war. The war to my mind couldn't be justified in political or military terms. there was no way that I could see to win, short of expunging the population of North Vietnam, and if the United States wasn't prepared to do that then there was really no point to it. It seemed obvious that South Vietnam...the government was not capable of supporting it's own existance.

CF: So it was the particular war itself, as opposed to war in general...

Claremont: Of course. I mean therein lies the crux of a diplomatists conflicts, the acceptance that war is a necessary resort of national policy. And yet the cost of war in temporal and spiritual terms is almost too terrible to contemplate.

CF: Although at times it is necessary.

Claremont: Necessary to who?

CF: Necessary to survival.

Claremont: The point was, in context, was that war necessary to the survival of the United States? Was the havok we helped wreak in Southeast Asia necessary or even justifiable? Had we left well enough along in 1956, 1948 or even better 1945, when there was a very real opportunity Ho could have been brought into the Western sphere of influence had the United States helped him against the French instead of helping the French against him, who knows what the history of the region might have been other than that tens of thousands---hundred of thousands —of innocent lives might have been spared. And the potential ruination of the American economy might have been avoided. Again, hindsight is the perfect way to look at a situation. At the time...I, myself, couldn't find an argument to sustain it..

CF: There seems to be a basic immorality in entering a war and bringing troops into a war and refusing to make a decision either not to stay or to stay and commit oneself to winning.

Claremont: Define winning.

CF: Well, achieving the stated objectives of a conflict.

Claremont: There was no consistent stated set of objectives relating to that war. The objectives changed every year, with every administration. No one knew precisely what we wanted or how we wanted to achieve it. Was this essentially a Vietnamese civil war; was it an invasion North Vietnam to South Vietnam; was this a situation where an influx of foreign troops (i.e. American) could make the difference, or was it something that should basically be left to be settled between the indigenous population?

CF: I think that unless you have preexisting clear objectives before committing force, you should not commit force.

CLAREMONT: Right. But at the time...it's easy to say at this end. Looking back....

CF: Well, truthfully, that's always been my opinion. The most immoral thing to me of the Vietnam war was not that we were there, but that we were there with no objectives and if we did have objectives, they were not objectives that we were prepared to commit to winning. And that means that you're just throwing lives away year after year after year.

We seem to have gotten a bit sidetracked there. I think it's important how reality is viewed and how it affects fictional reality. After working in acting you began, as you say, to work for Marvel on a freelance basis?

Claremont: I went to work at Marvel as an assistant editor in the Spring of 1974.

CF: Wergan't you first there in '69 though?

Claremont: As a gopher. For two months.

CF: I see, then you went back there in '74?

Claremont: I was freelancing for them for a couple of years. In addition to acting.

CF: What was your first published writing?

Claremont: My first professional sale was a novelette to the **Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction.** The sale was made in 1972, the story was published about eight months later.

CF: What was that about?

Claremont: Science fiction about a certain brand of telepaths in the near future. They had been dragooned into serving mankind, whether they wanted to or not.

CF: I see, and your first comic book sale?

Claremont: Technically, I suppose it would be some Sgt. Fury filler pages back in 1969. But the first story with my byline on it is a Hulk that I sold in 72—a flop—that eventually became a story that Archie Goodwin scripted...I forget the number, 148 or something.

CF: And your first regular series?

Claremont: First series was **Giant Size Dracula**, that was 1974. And then **War is Hell**, I guess.

CF: Again you were working with the concept of military conflict.

Claremont: Well, war books were back in then I suppose. The idea was dropped into my lap. I was told to make something of it.

CF: It was more the anti-war books that were in wasn't it?

Claremont: All depends on your point of view. Again the pro-, anti-...The decision I made in doing **War is Hell** was not to do a book that was ostensibly a message one way or the other, pro or anti, but just vignettes of the war. Vignettes of World War II and let the story speak for itself.

CF: But don't you control the view of war based on what slices of conflict you present?

Claremont: To the extent that an editor controls what a given scene looks like in a movie.

CF: By what you select and what you leave out?

Claremont: The trick, the necessity of something like that, is to find a true moment, a reality that transcends the question of pro or anti. You identify with the character, with the moment. You learn hopefully, something about yourself coming away from the story. You come out of it a little different than the way you went in. As do the characters, and one person could read the story and think to himself, "Well, this character was very heroic, very courageous, very noble, he did a good thing." Another might say "Yes, he did all these things, but no matter what happened, it was still a dirty disgusting business." The attempt was to go beyond the casual facile kind of traditional approach. Unfortunately given the parameters of the series there was a tonal cynicism...despair. When your hero is a ghost, it does kind of creates problems.

CF: I think that the market Marvel was targetting it at, and the time period Marvel was publishing the book, they were trying to create a feeling of despair about warfare.

Claremont: It's easily done.

CF: Do you think that the stark violence and the intensity of combat tend to make quicker characterization and revelation of a person? Or of a character?

Claremont: It is impossible to say because there is no...the conflict and action in a superhero story is just as intense, if its handled properly. The focus is just as tight. The necessity for exposition of character and the ex-

ploration or character in the shortest possible time as extreme.

CF: Isn't there something, perhaps because of the familiarity and the preponderance of the superhero story, that it's almost a more sanitized violence than the type of warfare you were portraying in the **War is Hell**?

Claremont: The...it can be. It depends on the writer, it depends on the moment. The critical element in the portrayal of violence is not the actual, I think the physical part, but the emotional. How does the character—how does he or she feel about what they have done or has been done to them. How do you cope with the moral and emotional toll it takes. To me that is the important question, not how badly one can be beaten up. The violence, to me what...what Wolverine endures in his mini-series to achieve his goal is no more grim or graphic than what Sgt. Rock endures every month. The important thing, to me, is that Kanigher with Rock and I with Wolverine are trying to portray the emotion. The pain behind the violence, or beyond the violence. The cost.

CF: Isn't there also an aspect of people not in control of what's happening to them?

Claremont: No one—I mean no character—in a comic book or any fictional work is in control of what is happening to them, the writer is in control.

CF: Yes, but depending on the situation, they have a certain amount, or seeming amount of control of what they encounter or where they are.

Claremont: The characters in **Barefoot Gen**, when the bomb drops, are no more in control of their lives than the characters in FF #49 and #50 when Galactus arrived in New York and prepared to destroy the world. If by extension you moved...you took the moment of **Barefoot Gen** and you moved it...instead of setting it in Hiroshima and instead moved it to the farthest northern reaches of Okaido, they wouldn't have known what happened, it would have been a null event, it would have been something that came over the radio. By the same token, if you took a character from New York and put him in Albany, he wouldn't have known what was happening.

CF: In most superhero books, though, don't the characters almost deliberately seem to enter the area of conflict or even look for the scene of potential conflict?

Claremont: No.

CF: But Wolverine flies to Japan...

Claremont: Yes, but the hero is always the respondant to events the hero never initiates. The hero responds to the antagonist. In Wolverine's situation, Shinga married Mariko to the man who became her husband. That was the initial act. That brought the response from Wolverine...flying out to Japan. Everything that happened...

CF: Nonetheless, he had the choice of flying or not flying to Japan. Or Spiderman goes swinging from rooftop to rooftop looking for...

Claremont: They all have the choice.

CF: But if you're looking at...Let's go back to a scene from **War is Hell**, very often these characters did not have the choice.

Claremont: The only character in the book that didn't have a choice was the ghost. Wolverine could no more not have gone to find out what happened to Mariko and stayed true to his character than a character in **War is Hell**, a fighter pilot, could have refused to fly out against the Luftwaffe. In that sense, every character in comics, every character in literature is caught up in events beyond his control or her control. The choice is inherent in the writer putting pencil to paper, pen to paper.

CF: In a lot of literature, say, what Ayn Rand would call romantic literature, the basic theme is how the character takes control and molds his environment. Whereas it seems in most war stories, that doesn't take place.

Claremont: I can't speak for most war stories, I only did...

CF: Well, in your war story.

Claremont: No, that's not true. In each of those stories, well the four that I consider my own, well actually all of them, you have a set of characters who are caught up in a greater historical situation, trying to mold the events in their favor. To salvage their lives, to survive, to go from point A to point B, to arrive at a resolution. The only event that is beyond their control is that of history, that applies to anything. You know, the Ilyana and Storm mini-series is a mute point in that it has already happened, we know the outcome. Ilyana spent seven years...and came out of it changed. We knew that on the last page of **X-Men #160**. What the mini-series is about is how she arrived at that point, what stations on the cross, so to speak, did

SHE SOARS ALOFT, LIKE AN EBON BIRD, LIGHTNINGS LANCING FROM HER FINGERTIPS. THE GLOW OF LIFE SHINING FULL UPON HER FACE!
SHE IS HAPPY HERE... ONLY TRUE HAPPY HERE, AMONG THE ELEMENTS...

she touch along the way? In a sense that whole series, the whole sequence of events, are out of her control

CF: In 1975 you were introduced to the book that probably made your reputation in the comic book industry. **Claremont: Iron Fist.**

CF: Moving on to the X-Men, were you involved at all with the creation of that book or was that...?

Claremont: Only in a peripheral sense in that I was sitting in when Dave and Len were doing plotting sessions and I'd kibitz in a few elements. The most notable being how to get rid of Kracoa at the end. But aside from that, the creation of the characters was exclusively Len's and Dave's—Len Wein and Dave Cockrum.

CF: You began writing the book right at the beginning, the characters personalities hadn't formed yet. You began to direct the characters. How did you decide what direction you should take the characters, who was going to form what type of personality? How does that all come about?

Claremont: It was by no means the unilateral decision that you seem to be indicating it was. The book was as much Dave's as mine. More so perhaps, he created the characters. We had long discussions who they were, why they were, what they were, where we wanted them to go, where we thought they would go. And to a large extent the first three issues are pretty much shakedown. The first issue Dave and I felt we had a strong sense of what the book was all about was #98. In a sense we let it evolve by it self, we didn't give it a specific direction. We wanted to let it go for a while, see what turned out.

CF: The concept of the earlier **X-Men** had always been that these were a group of young teenagers in a school being trained to be superheroes. Yet in the second incarnation the heroes—the characters—appear to be older.

Claremont: As I understand it, Len Wein had felt that they should be younger teenagers. Scott would be the oldest, or Wolverine perhaps. Dave and I were both not comfortable with this concept. We began evolving it in a different direction. The idea that Wolverine is much older. Banshee was certainly the professor's contemporary, Storm...until I did the origin story, we weren't prepared to giver her an age, suffice...save that she was no where near a teenager. Even if she was no more than fifteen years old, in terms of emotional maturity she was as ancient as time. We found that regardless of how one considered the group in terms of age, in terms of experience with Wolverine and Banshee and to a certain extent Storm and Cyclops you had most of the group being experienced. Fairly well versed in their powers, knowing what to do, and it made the original concept of the school increasingly hard because a set of attitudes and parameters that would hold true for a set of kids in their middle teens would not apply to young adults. Partly because they were too old and partly because the kids themselves were starting to feel feisty, feel their own oats, rebellion, letting the budding rebellion—the natural rebellion of youth take over.

CF: In other words, the evolving of the characters took place before you decided on this break from the original format.

Claremont: No. As the characters involved the evolution away from...the original format evolves with them. We never decided the first day to scrap the original concept, its just that as time went on certain things—the natural progression and we just went with it.

CF: Why was it decided to drop Thunderbird?

Claremont: Basically it was...there are two ways to basically lock a reader into a series. One is to create a character that the reader identifies with, empathizes for, and then put the character through hell and the reader will go right along with him. The second is to do something for shock value right at the beginning. The feeling was that since at that time **X-Men** was a quarterly, there was not time to build up the momentum, issue to issue momentum that you would build on a regular monthly title. Each issue would have to be self contained exclusively. If you took ten issues, for example, to build reader involvement then we'd be three years down the line, so it was felt that they wanted to get everyone's attention right away and the way to do it, they decided was to kill Thunderbird. It was something that had never happened to the X-Men before.

CF: It was similar to what Stan Lee had done with Jr. Juniper earlier.

Claremont: Something like that.

CF: Why Thunderbird?

Claremont: Because at the time, he was basically redundent. At the time, his powers were basically Wolverine's powers. Len felt that Wolverine was a character with more potential.

CF: And the more antagonistic personality was...

Claremont: Everything that Thunderbird had, Wolverine had better and claws besides.

CF: How do you account for the success, the sudden success of the book, especially since the previous incarnations of the book had not been successful?

Claremont: The obvious answer is that the readers recognized the obvious quality of the writing and the art and the potential of the characters.

CF: Well, you've written other books, perhaps as well,

and they have never gained the sudden success that these characters have.

Claremont: I suppose you could say that groups are in and the X-Men happened to be the first of the groups. Every group book other than **Champions,** that has been introduced in the last eight years has been a success.

CF: But not the massive success. I mean the **Avengers** and the **Fantastic Four** haven't the success.

Claremont: The **Avengers** and the **Fantastic Four** have had a rough time the last few years, the multiple change-overs in art and creative teams.

CF: But the **X-Men** has had changeover in the art...

Claremont: Actually, there hasn't been that serious a change over. We have had basically five artists since the series began: Dave Cockrum, John Byrne, Dave Cockrum, Paul Smith and John Romita, Jr., with only a comparative handful of fill-in artists along the way. We've had the same writer for eight years. So you have a great sense of continuity that a great many titles at DC and Marvel don't have. Again, the Titans have proved to be a success, the Micronauts are still in there, the Omega Men is a success, Marvel is preparing a number of new group books.

CF: Why do team books seem to be so pervasive.

Claremont: Well, they're pervasive because they're successful.

CF: Ok. Why are they so successful?

Claremont: If I knew that, I'd be running the company.

CF: The next major change in the lineup of the team is when Banshee left the team. Why was that?

Claremont: Basically we had to make room for the Phoenix, and there was a limit to the amount of people you could put into the book.

CF: And still have characterization.

Claremont: Well, if you assume a rough yardstick of one page per character, to introduce them, and you have seven main characters, plus if you have a team of villains, that's one page each to introduce them, plus supporting characters, plus the plot. You use up the book real fast.

CF: One thing that the **X-Men** comic seems to be a ground-breaker in, even to a larger degree than the Stan Lee novels, is the use of soap opera techniques in adventure stories. Do you think that that's had an effect on the popularity of the stories?

Claremont: I assume it has, I don't know. Again if I did know, I'd do it far more successfully than I have.

CF: I don't know that that can be accomplished.

Claremont: Well, I'd try it on other titles.

CF: You mentioned Phoenix and that brings to mind Dark Phoenix and the whole conflict that arose in terms of story-telling. In reading the issues, I got the impression that there wasn't really a clear picture of how the Dark Phoenix story was going and how it would wind up.

Claremont: There was a very clear picture of where it was going and where it would end up, the picture just reversed at the last minute.

CF: So she was deliberately turned into a killer and then was going to continue to be part of the Marvel Universe?

Claremont: I had it all worked out, Jim unfortunately didn't agree with my rationale. More unfortunately at that point, the book was already in production.

CF: That's right, we had those pages of artwork. Why was it decided that Phoenix had to die and other characters who have killed in the Marvel Universe are not condemned to that fate?

Claremont: I don't know, that's more determined by Jim than myself since he was making the decision as Editor-In-Chief and it was done in his exercise of his editorial perogative. He'd be the one to give you that answer.

CF: Even Wolverine has been established as a killer, hasn't he?

Claremont: On occasion. Of necessity.

CF: And Shooter isn't insisting on the same.

Claremont: I haven't heard from him.

CF: I can see why. When we interviewed John Byrne recently, he mentioned that the Wolverine character was not considered to be a major character that was given a lot of attention until he became the artist on the series. Is that a character he worked with you particularly to develop?

Claremont: It was a character that John has a special fondness for, more so than Dave. By the same token, Dave had a fondness for Nightcrawler. Every artist and writer has their own particular favorite and in any series in any company there is a tendancy to play those favorites.

CF: A lot has been written in the press both favorable and unfavorable about the way you handle female characters in the comics you've written. One pattern which seems to be true in a number of them is that they wind up dead. Is there a particular reason?

Claremont: Bad luck I would think.

CF: They seem to develop a great deal of power and unlike Stan Lee's prerequisite in Spiderman that with power comes responsibility, they seem to wind up with a lack of control.

Claremont: Well, the only two characters that come to mind whose death I actually wrote were Phoenix and Satana. Satana's death was an editorial decision to make way for a new Satana that Jim and Mike Reischer were working on with Mike Vosburg. Unfortunately, she never saw print. So the actual demise proved pointless. Phoenix was an exercise in power, the use of power. In her case, it proved more than she could handle. Not to say that the same could hold true for Binary or Storm, or anyone else. The same as it wouldn't hold true for Cyclops or Professor X or whoever.

CF: Storm seems to be running into some very serious problems as well, though.

Claremont: The essence of melodrama is conflict. The essence of conflict is to screw your characters' lives up as enthusiastically as possible.

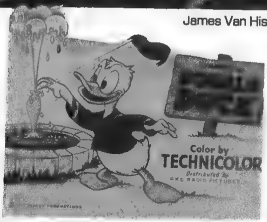
CF: In other words, the idea is to handicap the characters?

Claremont: No, the idea is to think of the worst possible situation you can think of to place a character in and then make it worse.

Continued Next Issue

Animated Antics

James Van Hise



While Donald Duck has been immortalized in the comic strips and paintings of Carl Barks, the animated shorts which spawned the character have been relegated to a position of lesser importance even though there never would have been any Donald Duck comics without them. Some fans of the strips have even gone so far as to express objections over the cartoons because Donald's voice is barely intelligible whereas whenever they read the comic books they can't help but giving Donald a normal voice. Considering that the cartoons predated the comic books by several years this is almost like saying that Carl Barks did the true Donald Duck and Disney did only a poor interpretation. Part of this may be due to how rarely the over 130 shorts featuring Donald are seen these days, unless you happen to have access to a cable TV system which is carrying the Disney Channel. But the fact remains that the cartoons came first, and their short-tempered and often cruel portrayal of Donald, as different from the civilized Barks' version as they may be, are nonetheless the **true** and very lively Donald Duck.

Just as Uncle Scrooge came to over-shadow and dominate the comic books when he was created and introduced there by Carl Barks, Donald was a minor supporting character introduced in the 1934 Silly Symphony "The Wise Little Hen." This version of Donald was more squat and had a longer bill, but he'd be refined over the following few years as his continuing importance was recognized. The Silly Symphonies were created as a springboard for experimentation to exist outside the more standard Mickey Mouse cartoons. Examples of previous and later experiments in the series include "Skeleton Dance" in 1929, the beautiful Technicolor "Flowers and Trees" in 1931, and 1937's "The Old Mill" which introduced the use of the multi-plane camera. The success of these experiments is attested to by the fact that both "Flowers and Trees" and "The Old Mill" won Oscars.

In "The Wise Little Hen", Donald is seen as a lazy duck who plays and dances on his small boat, but when asked by a Hen to help her plant corn, he suddenly has a belly-ache. Although slightly different in appearance from the way he'd become known later, this sailor-suited duck is clearly Donald, temperment and all. This same popular children's fable was adapted into a well-known folk song some years later which brought a slightly different interpretation to the events when it concluded with the line, "Those who work not shall not eat, and that's why they called her Red."

Clarence Nash, the voice of Donald Duck, was hired on Dec. 2, 1933 and became Disney's 125th employee. He was heard by Disney on a radio show using the voice to recite "Mary had a little lamb," a bit which was incorporated into his second cartoon appearance, "Orphan's Benefit," when Donald attempted to recite the poem on stage in front of an audience of jeering children. Nash performed Donald's distinctive voice in every cartoon up through Donald's final appearance in 1983. He even came out of retirement to do some looping of Donald's voice for the **New Mickey Mouse Club** a few years ago.

Although Donald's voice was well-known and popular to fans of all ages, Jack Hannah, one of the main directors on the Donald shorts during the later years began to find the voice annoying and when Nash couldn't enunciate the words more clearly, Hannah began having characters repeat what Donald had said for the sake of clarity.

Donald's third appearance was in the first color Mickey Mouse cartoon, 1935's "The Band Concert" directed by Wilfred Jackson. In it, Donald persists on playing "Turkey in the Straw" on the fife while Mickey valiantly attempts to conduct the rest of the orchestra in the William Tell Overture. Although ostensibly a cartoon starring Mickey Mouse, it was Donald Duck who stole the show, even though he also had a tornado to contend with.

By this time, with Mickey Mouse coming to symbolize Walt Disney Studios, the more rowdy antics of Mickey in his silent and black and white cartoon days were abandoned to make him as inoffensive as possible. This made Mickey a perhaps beloved but essentially dull character. Cartoons in which he was the sole

lead almost ceased entirely, and even when Pluto was his only supporting character the action invariably centered on Pluto, and Mickey's reactions to what Pluto got himself messed up in. This left an opening for supporting characters in the Mickey Mouse cartoons in order to present story possibilities for the writers. Thus the cartoons became things like "Mickey's Service Station," "Mickey's Fire Brigade" and "On Ice" [all from 1935] wherein Donald and Goofy were more than just supporting players. Whatever the hub of the action was, whether it was a service station or as a group of "Clock Cleaners" in that classic 1937 outing, the story would split into separate adventures spinning off of the same plot and reunite only shortly before the end. In the often seen 1938 short "Mickey's Trailer," the trio is traveling along country roads and mountain paths with Goofy driving and Donald and Mickey in the trailer. When the trailer becomes separated from Goofy's car, we see the harrowing adventures of Donald and Mickey trying to preserve life and limb until the trailer bounces and jounces down the mountain road to link up once more with Goofy who has been totally oblivious to their absence. Donald served even more as a counterpoint to the other two characters as Mickey was inevitably good-natured and Goofy was barely sentient.

Disney animator and director Ward Kimball expressed another possible reason for Mickey's decline and need for supporting players. In Leonard Maltin's book **Of Mice And Magic,** Kimball stated, "The more we got into reality, the more Mickey became an abstraction. In the old days of cartooning, the characters didn't have much relationship to reality. You could put almost anything into animation and the public accepted it. But whoever heard of a four-foot-tall mouse? That was the problem. Donald Duck, Goofy, Pluto, Clarabelle Cow and all the rest were drawn to scale. They were believable because they were of a relative size. Then along comes a mouse as big as they are and it stopped working." This of course requires that we easily accept the reality referred to, which includes talking animals that wear clothes.

Interestingly enough, Donald, Goofy and Mickey actually made a good team; certainly more engaging than any of the solo Mickey and Goofy films and often as good as the best solo Donald Duck, if not better. As explosive and unpredictable as Donald was, he needed a foil to play off of and react to and to create the situations he'd fall victim to. The best of these was 1947's "Mickey and the Beanstalk." Directed by Bill Roberts and Hamilton Luske, it's Donald's longest single adventure and is a departure for him in that it's not a contemporary story but rather a fanciful retelling of the "Jack and the Beanstalk" fable using this trio as the main character in their last appearance together. This film was never released individually to theatres but appeared as one of two long sequences in the feature **Fun and Fancy Free.**

Presented in an apparent middle ages setting, the story tells of a beautiful valley fallen on hard times. Donald and Goofy wait with fevered imaginations for the return of Mickey with the food he went to trade for, but when he returns he reveals his acquisition of magic beans instead. Donald explodes with rage and hurls the beans to the floor where they slip through the cracks and disappear. Before the inevitable happens, we see

Donald growing increasingly feverish with hysteria, climaxing in an hilarious scene when with eyes spinning hypnotically he sneaks up on their skinny cow with a knife and fork hidden behind his back. Almost upon his goal he burst into action only to be tackled by Mickey and Goofy as the cow escapes unscathed. But in the moment before he strikes, as we see this bizarre caricature of Donald coaxing, "Here bossy. Nice bossy, bossy," in that weird voice of his, a classic moment in cartoon lore is achieved.

The rest of the cartoon is top-notch Disney animation as the beans sprout and while the trio sleeps their whole house is lifted to a land in the clouds by the rapidly growing beanstalk.

In 1937, Donald's growing popularity had long been recognized and director Jack King was put in charge of a special Duck unit. His first effort, though, "Modern Inventions," still teamed the Duck with Mickey Mouse. It wasn't until "Donald's Ostrich" later that year that he attained his first solo outing.

Donald's ill-tempered on screen personality was established before any frames were ever painted, but

based on the audio track. It was animator Dick Lundy who helped begin the development of the poses and physical motions which would become synonymous with the mischievous duck for years to come. In **Of Mice and Magic** he recalled, "I listened to the dialogue track [for "The Orphan's Benefit",] and decided that he was an ego show-off. If anything crossed him he got mad and blew his top. For this I had him lean forward, chin out, arm straight out and fisted. The other arm, with fist, was swinging back and forth. His one foot was out straight, heel on floor, the other foot under him as he hopped up and down, quacking. This action was fairly violent for that time."

In 1938, "Donald's Nephews," directed by Jack King, introduced Huey, Dewey and Louie. In the cartoon, Donald's **sister** Dumbella, sent the nephews to visit, while in a 1937 Sunday strip from October 17, it's his cousin Della Duck who sends them to stay with him. This cartoon set the format to follow in those shorts featuring the nephews in that they terrorize Donald throughout. And yet in others they are not overly mischievous at all [probably due to the interpretations of different directors] and it is Donald who heaps cruelty on his nephews, who are portrayed as ordinary "children." In 1952's "Trick or Treat", directed by Jack Hannah, Donald has a nasty surprise to ruin his nephews' Halloween and he's even shown chortling over his cruelty. But enter Witch Hazel who terrorizes Donald and helps the nephews get their full measure of revenge and more. No cartoon character was ever able to display mortal fear as realistically as Donald Duck.

In 1942 Donald won his first Oscar for "Der Fuehrer's Face," the anti-Nazi propaganda film, one of several different kinds of pro-U.S. government films made by Disney during the war. Unlike the others, including "The New Spirit", in which Donald displays the importance of paying taxes early, as well as the impressive "Victory Through Air Power," "Der Fuehrer's Face" is about the only one of the wartime cartoons still seen much today.

Ordinarily Disney preferred not to include anything overtly topical or political of any kind in his films, and in 1941, ignored a suggestion made in a letter by Robert Horton, Director of Information for the Office of Emergency Management, to send some of Disney's writers to Washington for a conference so that Disney's cartoons might include such topical references as, "For instance, Donald Duck could, instead of going out for an evening of poker playing, go out for an evening of training as an air raid warden—he certainly has the voice for it." On October 24, 1947, when Walt Disney testified before the House Committee on Un-American Activities [and blamed his union problems in 1941 on communist agitators], he explained that he understood how his cartoons could be used as a tool for propaganda and only did so during WWII because America was at war. "During the war we thought it was a different thing. It was the first time we ever allowed anything like that to go in the films. We watch so that nothing gets into the films that would be harmful in any way to any group or any country. We have large audience of children and different groups, and we try to keep them as free from anything that would offend anybody as possible."

In the late Thirties, animator Jack Hannah was moved into the story department at Disney and was teamed with Carl Barks to work on the Duck cartoons. They developed stories together for nearly five years until Hannah went into directing Donald Duck cartoons and Carl Barks left animating to draw comic books. In 1942, story men Homer Brightman and Harry Reeves developed plans for a Donald Duck feature called **Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold.** But because of the pressures of producing war-time shorts in record time, the project was shelved. At the suggestion of Walt Disney, Jack Hannah and Carl Barks took the story and drew it as a comic book in their spare time, with each producing 32 of the 64 pages of what would become Dell Four-Color Comics #9.

Hannah went on to direct many Donald Duck cartoons, alternating with Jack King until King's retirement in 1947. Thereafter Hannah became the sole director of Donald Duck. Duck cartoons directed by Hannah which received Oscar nominations include "Chip 'n' Dale" [1947], "Tea For Two Hundred" [1948], "Toy Tinkers" [1949], "Trick or Treat" [1952], "Rugged Bear" [1953] and "No Hunting" [1955].

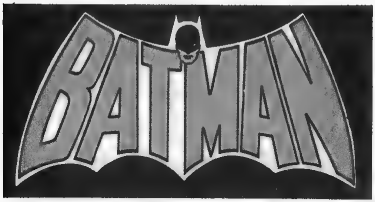
The Chip 'n' Dale cartoons have become some of the most popular Donald Duck shorts as he matches wits with what seem to be puny adversaries but who match his cruelty with cleverness. Towards the end, the two chipmunks began doing to Donald what the duck had done to Mickey Mouse twenty years before.

The last regular Donald Duck cartoon was the 1955 "Chip's Ahoy," directed by Jack Hannah. Thereafter Donald starred in a series of educational cartoons as well as make occasional appearances on the **Disneyland** TV series wherein Donald met with Walt to introduce some of his classic cartoons. The high point was probably the March 11, 1960 show in which Jiminy Cricket hosted **This is Your Life, Donald Duck.**

Although not appearing in any new animation, the voice of Donald Duck, Clarence Nash, makes occasional convention appearances.

NOTES

Sam Kujava



THE HERO AND THE FRAUD

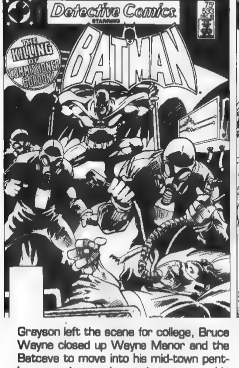
The Caped Crusader...the Masked Manhunter...the Darknight Detective...featured star of **Batman Comics, Detective Comics, World's Finest Comics, Batman and the Outsiders**—Batman has been around for forty-four years, since his debut in **Detective #27**.

He's been around for a long time, but he hasn't been going strong in years. Recent fan favorites such as the **Uncanny X-Men,** the **New Teen Titans** and **Fantastic Four** are more worthy of our attention. The characters are most intriguing and the writing and art show a passionate involvement by the creative people behind the scenes. They deserve your support and their healthy sales.

"The" Batman belongs at the bottom.

It pains me to say this. I've liked the character and followed his adventures since my childhood. As conceived, he was full of potential and has survived a myriad of incarnations under different editors, writers and artists. Even if a particular issue was bad, if the story or drawing was "off" that month, there was always that great blue and grey costumed figure casting voluminous shadows from the tallest building in Gotham City.

Depending on what generation you're from, you were probably glad when Batman and Robin stopped going to other planets and dimensions and facing strange alien beings every issue. Or you were overjoyed when the "camp" craze corresponding with the TV Batman ended, and the two Caped Crimefighters stopped trading puns with outrageous villains and started solving crimes again. Like me you were probably surprised when Dick



Grayson left the scene for college, Bruce Wayne closed up Wayne Manor and the Batcave to move into his mid-town penthouse and grew longer bat-ears on his cowl. Up until this time, the one thing you could be sure of was that change was inevitable.

Up until 1969, Batman was a changing, growing, evolving character, like most others. In the last 14 years he has grown stagnant, boring, even losing many of his traits.

The hero is a fraud. But don't blame Batman. Blame the folks in charge of his monthly exploits. They've been milking a dead cow for far too long now.

***

In my case timing was everything. I had started with comics rather late in childhood, at the age of ten. I was eleven when one of my kid brothers shoved a copy of **TV Guide** under my nose. A mid-season replacement show, called **Batman**, was going to begin on ABC that week. The first episode would be shown on Wednesday, with the concluding episode to be aired on Thursday. The photo of two weirdly garbed people in a souped-up, customized car didn't register with me. Batman and Robin were color drawings in a comic book to me, nothing more. It took a great effort on the part of 11-year-old brain cells to connect comic art fantasy to live action reality.

I grew a year or so older watching Batman on TV every week, loving the first few episodes, suffering through the remaining output. Had the show gotten that bad, or was I just growing up?

One thing the show did do was transform me from sporadic to regular reader of DC Comics featuring the adventures of Batman and Robin. The style of the comics thankfully did not much reflect the inanity of the show. Oh, Robin punned a lot more, and he and Batman ran up against an unusual share of silly super-villains, but it seemed, even to a kid, that there was an effort here to make the comics better by far than the television version. I appreciated such quality control. Credit editor Julius Schwartz.

12...13...14 years old. Great changes were taking place in my life in a short amount of time. Coincidentally, radical alterations were being performed on the Batman. His television show had been cancelled. "Camp" was a gimmick that could not sustain itself for too long. At DC, sometime Batman artist Carmine Infantino was now editorial director for all DC Comics. It was a rich, explosive period for risks and experimentation under his direction. **Batman Comics** had sold a million copies a month during the TV show's popularity. Carmine and Julie decided to leave the video Batman behind, and changed the comic book Batman dynamically...startlingly.

Young writer Dennis O'Neil and young artist Neal Adams were brought in to give the strip new identity and direction. The writer moved his characters from their familiar settings and jettisoned any sort of 'camp' dialogue. The artist altered the costume, muscled up the figures, and injected moody, nighttime atmosphere into the strip. It was a return to the basics, the simplicity of Batman's beginnings, coupled with the assurance and slickness of "today's" sensibilities (circa 1969).

The Penguin and the Riddler retired. They needed time off. New villains like Ras al Ghul and dusted off improved baddies like the Joker and Two-Face gave Batman troubles and struggles like we had never imagined.

As I entered puberty, the anticipation of manhood, never to look back, it seemed that Batman, too, was entering a new phase of growth and maturity that excited a lot of readers. It obviously excited people like Dick Giordano, Len Wein, Marv Wolfman, Gerry Conway and Paul Levitz. Their myopic view of the Batman as this one kind of particular character would set the stage for the hero's downfall.

***

The collaborations of O'Neil and Adams on Batman are relatively few. Irv Novick, Bob Brown and Dick Dillin were brought in to produce Batman in a quantity Neal was unable to realize. The artists followed Neal's style closely. His rendition of Batman was the definitive one, for now. O'Neil wrote many scripts for all these artists but his best stories always seemed to be illustrated by his buddy Adams. The kind of work they turned out, together, was special, and rare in the industry. Even they could not have foreseen that 'their' Batman would go on and on and on. For an incredible 14 years and counting, Batman has been painfully stuck in this stylistic/artistic quagmire.

I truly believe that if by some miracle, Denny and Neal had remained as the regular Batman team for a number of years, they would have played around with the character. A lot! He wouldn't have been

the same hero that he was in 1969 and 1973 and 1978 and 1983. The longer their tenure on the books, the more experiments and risks we would have seen.

Sales were not good in the 1970s and they have dropped even more in the last few years. That alone would have been a good excuse to toss out the 'old' and try something new. Yet this has not happened.

The people in charge of the Batman title up at DC have carved the O'Neil/Adams version of Batman in marble, strewn flowers at its feet and worshipped it as their one true god for the last few years. They tell the readers that this Batman is the best, that all the 'other' Batmens are inferior and by telling the lie over and over more and more fans, many of whom have not read any 'other' comics, believe the lie to be a truth.

Bruce Wayne suffered a terrible trauma as a child, witnessing the murder of his parents. Since then he has been obsessed with the eradication of the criminal element. This was a good idea played up well with Denny's preachy writing and Neal's forceful art. The lie is that this motive to revenge his dead parents works year after year. It does not. It was worn out long ago. To keep the obsession going, just as strong as the previous 150 issues, gives Batman a decidedly unheroic bearing. He is unattractive, overbearing, fanatical and ultimately hateful.

The lie is that Batman and Robin now have little in common. Batman is essentially a loner. Robin has 'grown up' and doesn't have quite the drive that Batman does. Breaking up the two crimefighters was a good change-of-pace in its time. To keep them separated after all these years was just plain stupid. Millions of kids have watched Batman TV reruns and various Batman cartoon shows. The image of adult Batman and teen-age Robin going into action together is solid. Imagine all the potential buyers going to the newsstands to find the same heroes they enjoyed on TV. In the pages of the comic they find a lone Batman who snarls at criminals as he beats them savagely and calls them 'slime' and 'scum'. If Robin does show up, it is usually for the purpose of Bruce driving a bigger wedge between the two friends. Batman is treating his new ward, Jason Todd, even worse. Todd had only been around for a few months and already Bruce/Batman chewed the kid out on a

number of occasions and made the child run away to rejoin the circus. Wayne 'adopts' Jason because he feels responsible for his parents' deaths, but he doesn't exhibit the maturity or patience to have the right to care for an orphaned child!

Batman and Robin belong together. Bats needs a friend, someone to talk to. It's a humanizing connection much better than reading panel after panel of "THE" Batman's chilling, grim thoughts to himself.

The lie is that the O'Neil/Adams version of Batman is the only way to go. Sales have continued to drop on DC's second most well-known, merchandised hero, but the editors and writers seem to be committed to not budging an inch toward **real** change. Levitz, Giordano and Wein have all sat in the Batman editorial chair...their tenure on these titles and handling of the character has been as different as night...and night. The names change but the mediocrity remains the same.

***

Hey, I'll allow for the style to remain relatively the same. Giordano was always taken with Neal's rendition of Batman. If he wants Batman to be drawn in that overmuscled, ultra-realistic style, that is his decision. If the editors want the writers to follow the same basic formula by which O'Neil originally delighted his readers and later bored them, that is their right.

What is wrong, wrong, wrong about the depths to which Batman has sunk is that he is no longer a hero. He exhibits traits that paint him as somewhat evil, internally. He thinks of criminals as less than human, and thus denying them that least respect, he brands himself as less than human, a

rabid, hating, hateful crime fighting machine. Batman can seldom muster the least amount of social grace necessary to treat his few friends with even a trace of civility. Lucius Fox, Alfred the Butler, Dick Grayson, Jason Todd, Vicki Vale and others—they all have been snubbed and dumped on by a single-minded avenger.

A hero is basically courageous and noble. We admire his exploits. Sure, he has problems with his career and friends, what with the difficulty of juggling secret identity and crimefighting in each 24-hour day. That's why we admire a hero all the more for his ability to deal with his friends with respect, warmth...and humor!

There hasn't been anything humorous, or fun, about Batman in a number of years. It is not a comic book you look forward to read...it is depressing comedown for a mighty hero who has seen better days over his 44 year existence. The readers are tired of each issue's latest scarred, insane monster/villain. They are sick of Wayne's melodramatic histrionics directed at characters who care for him. They feel ripped off by sluggishly unfolding plotlines that jump from **Batman** to **Detective** and back again, requiring the consumer to buy two different titles to read one story!

The readers are deserting for the better comics available today. Sales have dropped to embarrassingly low levels for such a major character. Batman has been corrupted from super-hero to sad fraud with his one-note characterization.

Will someone else tell the captains that their ship is sinking?

[Note: Since this was written, DC has taken some first, halting steps in the direction suggested.]

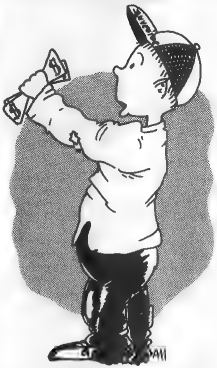
COLLECTOR'S CORNER

By T. I. Pavaro

Did you hear the one about the collector that read comics? He bought a book out of series.

Let's sit back for a moment and chat about the differences between a collector, an investor and a reader of comics. These three types are quite different and do not overlap as often as you might expect. There is a very specific drive which pushes a collector to the threshhold of fanaticism in achieving full sets of either particular books, particular characters or the works of particular writers and artists. Often it has little or nothing to do with the intrinsic readability or artistic worth of what is collected, although writing and rendering can have an initial impact in choosing what is collected. A collector will continue to collect a series long after the initial attraction is forever gone. There are certainly collectors today who save titles published by Marvel Comics because they were attracted to the book by the work of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby when this team was at its height of creativity and even though the team has long since broken up and neither continues to do work for Marvel Comics, the collector heedlessly continues to add issues to their collection as they are released.

Some few true collectors may rarely take the liklihood of future enhanced value into consideration in selecting books for collection. Normally this factor is not important to the collector although there is a popular confusion of investors with collectors. To the investors, the possibility of profit is foremost, to the collector, it is mostly irrelevent.



Carefully selecting books to be added by virtue of a particularly good approach in the writing, a particularly important event in the literary lives of the characters or any other specific virtue of a book is also not a consideration for the collector. These factors may interest a connoisseur or a budding popular historian, but they are meaningless to the collector. A collector may have to pay more for a comic in which a main character perishes, such as **X-Men 137**, but unless the collector is into necrophilia the book is no more significant than 136 or 138 as missing any of them will leave a nice gaping hole in the collection which will need to be filled.

Perhaps the most peculiar irrelevancy to the collector is the continuing storyline itself as the collector by definition does not even have to read the book, just collect it. A reader reads, a collector stores — carefully.

What then is a collector? Now that we know what he is not we must still ask what he is...what he does...what makes him tick. Why does he follow the practices he does, so very carefully. Finally, what leads one to collect and what sets apart such a person from the run-of-the-mill human being who does not?

Once we answer these questions satisfactorily we will begin to understand what body of skills and knowledge is important to anyone choosing to become a collector and what an interested individual can do to begin collecting or to improve the quality of an existing collection. We will then, in small easily absorbed doses, begin to offer this information in a way that is both enjoyable to read and important to the satisfaction derived from collection.

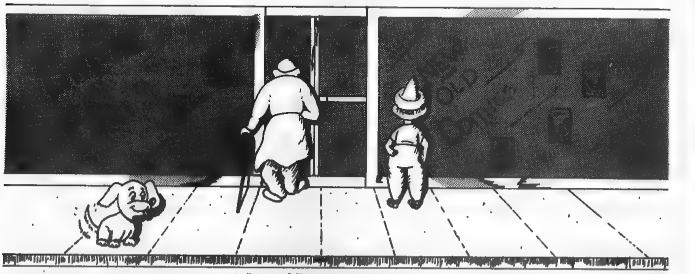
At the most elementary level, collection is the practice of obtaining every item which can be defined as fitting a predetermined set of criteria. To begin we must set the criteria. The exact parameters to the collection are important if the goal of a completed set is to be reached. The definition needs to be realistic and not so large or so expensive that it is nothing but a false hope. At the same time the definition needs to be large enough to encompass some difficulty in completion lest the entire set be achieved in too short a period of time. At the two extremes we have exam-

ples of the collector who decides to collect all comics in existence and quickly tires as he finds his task baffling and lacks any idea even where to begin and the collector who decides that his set will consist of one each of the latest week's books and completes his collection within the hour. Of course, the individual circumstance of the collector is a very large determinant in deciding what is a realistic goal and is not beyond the reach of the collector either financially or otherwise. If a collector simply cannot obtain the money to buy one each of the latest releases or is in a locality where the books simply cannot be obtained (although, as we will point out in later columns, this is not the major problem which it may seem) then even that simple task is too large a goal. On the other hand, there is the case of a dealer I once knew who had the practice of deciding on collecting a particular series, entering his warehouse and in one simple grab — collecting the entire set. This too is certainly not a valid way to go about collecting and delivers none of the pleasure of the pursuit. Even the most complete dealer will find that there are goals which he has difficulty in achieving (such as collecting an entire set of Centaur Comics or some such other obscure publisher).

What is set as the goals of a collection, once the factors of availability and finance are taken into consideration, can vary tremendously from collector to collector. One person may decide to collect the works of a particularly fine penciller or of a particularly erudite writer or just of creators who appeal to him to some unusual degree. Another may want to obtain all of the appearances of a character that strikes her fancy. Then there is the ambitious soul who wants every book released by a publisher or every book within a certain genre or subgenre. Any of these and multitudes of other guidelines form the basis of valid collections.

Once it is decided to achieve that special set of books, several simple logistical matters must be considered. Where will the collection be kept — and remember, depending on the scope of the collection, the final size may be much larger than the initial few books and a large amount of space will be necessary (although very valid collections can be built on the basis of a very few, very scarce and special group of books). How the books will be stored in the area set aside is also an important consideration. Whether to store the books loose, in plastic bags, in one of the more sophisticated plastic containers and/or in comic book boxes is a very major decision in the life of every collection. And many collectors and even experts in the field of chemistry have long debated the particular merits of different methods. Factors such as the projected life of the collection (most collectors choosing something just on the other side of forever), cost and personal taste must be considered. (At a later date we will be running much longer and more in-depth discussions of the various storage paraphenalia and at that time we will delve into the specific virtues and faults of each method.)

The amount of time and money to be committed to the collection make a very large difference at this point and hard decisions must be made as to how important the collection is to be and what resources will be committed both now and in the future. Of course, these factors were also faced in setting the parameters of the collection, but now is a good time to reevaluate the decisions made. It may make sense to committ less money to the pursuit of the hobby as this can often lead to a more enjoyable experience, the experience of actually personally seeking out each book and devoting a part of oneself to the fulfillment of the dream. This — time and money - variable is very much effected by the amount of time that one can devote as the activity of collecting



is usually a combination of the two — time and money — since the less money is devoted to the goal the more time will be consumed and the less time is committed the more money will be needed.

Method of search is also an important consideration. Will you be trading with other collectors, and if so, will it be in person or through the mails or some combination of both? Will you attend conventions where you can do business with other collectors or collector/dealers? Will you utilize the services of professional mail order dealers? Many of these individuals are very trustworthy and professional in how they do business, grade books [another subject we will have to return to in the future] and seek out your needs. Others are, plain and simply, rip-off artists out to separate you from your hard earned dollar without delivering anything in return. You will have to learn to tell them apart [a task which this column will assist you with in future installments] if you are to make use of this very important resource. Finally, will you develop a relationship with a retailer who maintains a store in your area? This individual can be the collector's best friend or worst enemy. He can assist you in quickly understanding what he has available in open stock and often can seek out those books he doesn't have. And if you are collecting any ongoing series he is indispensible as he can single-handedly assure that there are no future holes in your set. But, again this individual can either be honest and hardworking or unscrupulous and even if the former he can either be very effective at what he does or sloppy and inefficient. And remember very carefully that the cheapest dealer is very definitely not always the best. Very often you get exactly what you pay for. [This too is an area that we will return to at a future date as we illustrate the various services that should be available from your dealer and the best ways of selecting that certain store which will thereafter have your allegiance. We will also discuss the comparative merits of dealing primarily with only one store and spreading your business between many retailers.]

What to collect. Where to put what is collected and how to store it. How much time and money to devote to collecting. And how to search out what is to be collected. These are the questions that you must answer on beginning your search, and these are also questions that the experienced collector is very wise to reevaluate from time to time. I will give you the next two months to consider these aspects of the hobby before I return once more to offer more, hopefully helpful, hints on the fine art of being a collector of comic books. I certainly hope that you will be back in the collector's corner once again as we explore the importance of grading and condition as well as touching on some of those questions that we have already mentioned throughout the article.

Guide

Continued From Page 12

☐ **The Best of DC Digest #48**—Superman teams with other superheroes.

☐ **Vigilante #8**—Story by Marv Wolfman and pencils by Chuck Patton. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only.

Shipping the week of January 17th for an on sale date of February 9th.

☐ **Batman #371**—Story by Doug Moench, art by Don Newton, inks by Alfredo Alcala and cover by Ed Hannigan and Dick Giordano.

☐ **The Flash #333**—Story by Cary Bates, pencils by Carmine Infantino, inks by Frank McLaughlin. Cover pencilled by Carmine Infantino. The lawyer that hates the Flash.

☐ **GI Combat #265**—The Haunted Tank.

☐ **Superman #395**—Story by Elliot S. Maggin, pencils by Curt Swan and inks by Dave Hunt. Viking magic and presidential sweeps.

☐ **Arak, Son of Thunder #33**—Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Ron Randall and inks by Rick Magyar.

☐ **The New Teen Titans #42**—Story by Marv Wolfman, pencils by George Perez, inks by Romeo Tanghal and cover by George Perez.

☐ **Star Trek #4**—Story by Mike W. Barr, pencils by Tom Sutton, inks by Ricardo Villagran. Klingons help Kirk.

☐ **The Omega Men #14**—Story by Todd Klein, pencils by Todd Smith and inks by Pablo Marcos. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **Manhunter #1**—Archie Goodwin, writer; Walt Simonson, artist and cover by Walt Simonson. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only.

Shipping the week of January 24th for an on sale date of February 16th.

☐ **Green Lantern #176**—Len Wein, writer, Dave Gibbons, artist and cover by Dave Gibbons. New Villains.

☐ **Sgt. Rock #138**

☐ **Legion of Super-Heroes #311**—Story by Paul Levitz, pencils by Keith Griffen and inks by Larry Mahlstedt. Brainiac's on the rampage.

☐ **Batman and the Outsider #10**—Story by Mike W. Barr, art and cover by Jim Aparo. The execution of Bleck Lightning.

☐ **Supergirl #18**—Story by Paul Kupperberg, pencils by Carmine Infantino and inks by Bob Oksner.

☐ **The Saga of the Swamp Thing #24**—No information available at press time.

☐ **Warlord #81**—Story by Cary Burkett, pencils by Dan Jurgens, inks by Dan Adkins and covers by Dan Jurgens and Dick Giordano. The return of Joshua.

☐ **Thriller #7**—Story by Robert Loren Fleming, art by Trevor Von Eeden and cover by Trevor Von Eeden. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **Infinity, Inc #3**—Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Jerry Ordway, inks by Mike Machlan. A sinister fate befalls the JSA. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **New Talent Showcase #5**—Direct Sales Only.

Shipping the Week of January 31st for an on sale date of February 23rd.

☐ **Action Comics #555**— Story by guest writer Paul Kupperberg, art by Gil Kane and cover by Gil Kane. The first parallel story, paired with Supergirl #20.

☐ **Detective Comics #538**—Batman by writer Doug Moench, penciller Gene Colan and inker Bob Smith. Green Arrow by writer Joey Cavelieri and artist Shawn McManus and cover by Gene Colan and Dick Giordeno.

☐ **Jonah Hex #84**—Michael L. Reisher, writer and Tony De Zuniga, artist. Fun at the Mardi Gras.

☐ **World's Finest Comics #33**—Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Rick Hoberg and inks by Bill Collins. The snow plague.

☐ **All-Star Squadron #33**—Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Rick Hoberg and inks by Bill Collins. The Japanese attack an oil refinery. Guest starring The Freedom Fighters.

☐ **Arion, Lord of Atlantis #18**—Story by Paul Kupperberg, pencils by Jan Duurseme, inks by Bob Smith and cover by Jan Duurseme. Arion's destiny in the wilderness.

☐ **Superboy #53**—Story by Paul Kupperberg and pencils by Kurt Schaffenberger. The Superboy Revenge Squad is back.

☐ **Nathaniel Dusk Mini-Series #4**—Story by Don McGregor, art and cover by Gene Colan. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only.

☐ **Ronin, Book VI**—Story and art by Frank Miller. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only.

AC

☐ **Nightveil #2**
☐ **Starmasters #1**
☐ **Black Diamond #5**

Archie

SHIELD

☐ **Blue Ribbon #7**

☐ **The Fly #6**

☐ **Katy Keene #3**

☐ **The Original Shield #1**

CAPITAL Publications Inc

☐ **Badger #4**—Writer Mike Baron, artist Jeff Butler and cover by Butler/Dorscheid. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only. Dumb beasts at each others throats.

☐ **Nexus #6**—Story by Mike Baron and art by Steve Rude. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only. The blackhole.

☐ **Whisper #2**—Story by Steve Grant and art by Rich Larson. Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only. Whispers' secrets are revealed.

CHARLTON COMICS

January 16 shipping

☐ **Haunted #73**
☐ **Fightin' Marines #174**

January 23 shipping

☐ **Attack #46**
☐ **Scary Tales #44**

Comico

January Releases

☐ **Comico Primer #8**
☐ **Mage #1**

EAGLE COMICS

☐ **Judge Dredd #7**
☐ **Robohunter #2**

ECLIPSE COMICS

☐ **Aztec Ace #1**—Introducing Aztec Ace in "The Mexicali Serpent" by Doug Moench, Michael Hernandez and Nestor Redondo. Baxter paper.

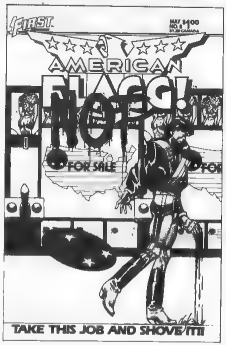
☐ **DNAgents #9**—"The Crossfire Papers" by Mark Evanier, Will Meugniot, Al Gordon and special guest artist Dan Spiegle. Crossfire returns, surprising everyone, especially Surge. The story begins with his death and ends with his resurrection. Baxter paper.

☐ **Sabre #2**—By Don McGregor, Billy Graham and Bruce Miller. Plus Melissa Siren stars in "There's Always a First Time for Everything" by

McGregor and Kent Williams.

☐ **Eclipse Monthly #5**—Cap'n Quick and a Foozle continued by Marshall Rogers. The Masked Man finds himself accused of the assassination of a congressman in "The Trial" by B.C. Boyer. Wildey did the cover.

☐ **Ms. Tree #7**—"The Cold Dish" chapters 7 ["Visiting Hours"] and 8 ["Knee-deep in Death"] by Max Allan Collins and Terry Beatty with art assist from Gary Kato. Plus Mike Mist by the same team and The Scythe in "She's Still a Mystery to Me" by Mullaney, Goodson and Truman. Baxter paper.



Shipping the second Tuesday in January.

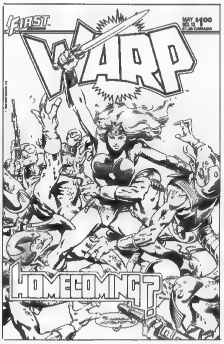
☐ **American Flagg #8**—Written and drawn by Howard Chaykin.

☐ **E-Man #14**—Cover by Joe Staton. "The Wrath of Randarr", written and pencilled by Joe Staton, inked by Rick Burchett.

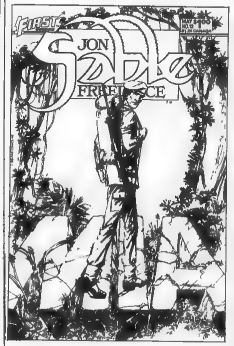
Shipping the third Tuesday in January.

☐ **Mars #5**—Cover by Hempel and Wheatley. "The Whole Shebang" by Mark Wheatley and Marc Hempel. The Black Fame: "Beyond the Night Across the Day...!" by Peter Gillis, Tom Sutton and Bruce Patterson.

☐ **Warp #13**—Cover by Bingham and Gustovich. "Bid the Past Return!" by Peter Gillis, Jerry Bingham and Mike Gustovich. Outrider: "A Heritage of Stars!" by Gillis and Lenin Delsol.



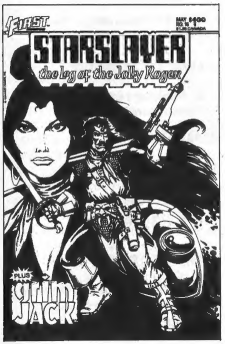
Shipping the Fourth Tuesday in January:



Guide

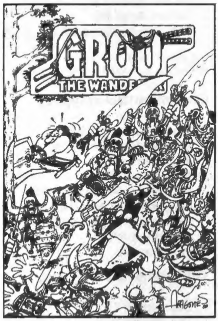
☐ **Jon Sable, Freelance #12**—Cover by Mike Grell. "MI—Part One" written and drawn by Mike Grell.

☐ **Starslayer #16**—Cover by Timothy Truman. "S.A.M." by John Ostrander and Timothy Truman. Grimjack: "Buried Past—Conclusion" by Ostrander and Truman.



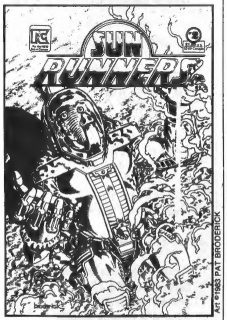
☐ **Groo #8**—By Sergio Aragones featuring Chakoal. Baxter paper.

☐ **Alien Worlds #7**—Written by Bruce Jones and featuring art by George Perez. Baxter paper.



☐ **Pacific Presents #4**—Art by Tim Conrad, Steve Ditko and Will Meugniot. Baxter paper.

☐ **Elric #6**—The final chapter by Michael T. Gilbert, P Craig Russel and Roy Thomas. Baxter paper.



☐ **Sun Runners #2**—Written by Roger McKenzieand, drawn by Pat Broderick with a back story by Paul Smith. Baxter paper.

SPECTRUM

☐ **The Survivors #5**
☐ **The Guardian #2**

TEXAS COMICS INCORPORATED

☐ **The Justice Machine #1**
☐ **The Elementals #2**
☐ **The Justice Machine #2**

LAST CHANCE

MARVEL

December 6 shipping

- ☐ The Thing #10
- ☐ Daredevil #205
- ☐ New Mutants #14
- ☐ The A-Team #1
- ☐ Kazar #31
- ☐ Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe #15
- ☐ Dr. Strange Special Edition #2
- ☐ Sly From Sirius #1

December 13 shipping

- ☐ Amazing Spiderman #251
- ☐ Capt. America #292
- ☐ Thor #342
- ☐ Indiana Jones #16
- ☐ The Generic Comic #1
- ☐ Dr. Strange #64
- ☐ X-Men/Micronauts #4
- ☐ Tarzan of the Apes #1
- ☐ U.S. 1 #9
- ☐ Savage Sword #98
- ☐ Fantastic Four Special Edition #1

December 20 shipping

- ☐ Incredible Hulk #294
- ☐ Avengers #242
- ☐ Conan #157
- ☐ Marvel Tales #162
- ☐ X-Men #180
- ☐ Rom #53
- ☐ Powerman/Iron Fist #104
- ☐ G.I. Joe #22
- ☐ Marvel Age #13—.25

December 27 shipping

- ☐ Fantastic Four #265
- ☐ Marvel Team-up #140
- ☐ Iron Man #181
- ☐ Peter Parker #89
- ☐ Defenders #130
- ☐ Star Wars #82
- ☐ Alpha Flight #9
- ☐ What If #44
- ☐ Hercules #2
- ☐ Jack of Hearts #4
- ☐ Elektra Saga #3
- ☐ Micronauts Special Edition #5

DC

December 13 shipping

- ☐ Justice League #225
- ☐ Wonder Woman #314
- ☐ Atari Force #4
- ☐ Blackhawk #269
- ☐ DC Comics Presents #68
- ☐ Fury of Firestorm #22
- ☐ Best of DC Digest #47
- ☐ Amethyst #12
- ☐ Vigilante #5

December 20 shipping

- ☐ Batman #370
- ☐ The Flash #332
- ☐ G.I. Combat #284
- ☐ Superman #384
- ☐ Arak #32
- ☐ Teen Titans #41
- ☐ Star Trek #3
- ☐ Omega Man #13
- ☐ Nathaniel Dusk #3
- ☐ Green Lantern/Green Arrow #7

December 27 shipping

- ☐ Green Lantern #175
- ☐ Sgt. Rock #387
- ☐ Legion #10
- ☐ Batman & the Outsiders #9
- ☐ Supergirl #18
- ☐ Saga of the Swamp Thing #23
- ☐ The Warlord #90
- ☐ Thriller #6
- ☐ Infinity Inc. #2
- ☐ New Talent Showcase #4

January 3 shipping

- ☐ Action Comics #554
- ☐ Detective #537
- ☐ Jonah Hex #83
- ☐ World's Finest #302
- ☐ All-Star Squadron #32
- ☐ Arion #18
- ☐ Superboy #52
- ☐ The Redeemer #4
- ☐ Batman Special #1

CAPITAL

- ☐ Badger #3

CHARLTON

December 12 shipping

- ☐ Ghostly Tales #86
- ☐ Fightin' Navy #130

January 2 shipping

- ☐ Gunfighters #84
- ☐ Ghost Manor #74

EAGLE

December shipping

- ☐ Judge Dredd #6

ECLIPSE

December shipping

- ☐ I Am Coyote Graphic Novel—$5.95

FIRST

December 15 shipping

- ☐ E-Man #13
- ☐ American Flagg #7

December 22 shipping

- ☐ Warp #12
- ☐ Mars #4

December 29 shipping

- ☐ Jon Sable #11
- ☐ Starslayer #15

Publishers Picks

Choice morsels. The best the four-color medium has to offer, at least in your author's humble opinion, will be selected and presented here for your inspection every issue. Every two months I will go over to my shelf and select the items that I, personally, as I pretend no special yardstick or system of standards and I most certainly am not looking for those of "artistic" merit, enjoyed especially. And these can be anything from a comic book to a graphic magazine to an illustrated novel, anything which will be of interest to devotees of comic storytelling. And I should also point out at this point that I am very heavily prejudiced towards those that tell a story well not to those that merely look pretty. On occasion I will bend the rules and point out an older story or book that I happen to have just reread and feel worthy of special attention. Yes, this column is VERY *self-indulgent. You see, I can afford to do that, as I am the publisher.*

Why should you read the column? Try a few and you may decide that I have good taste or you may decide that my tastes are weird enough to prove interesting and in either case you will find something of value. You may decide to try some of those items which I found especially interesting—or you may decide to buy only those that I do not like as tastes differ radically. Mercifully, it will be a short column.

Dazzler and **G.I. Joe** are probably tied for the most maligned titles in the Marvel line-up. And thoroughly without reason. It has simply become an automatic reaction to write negatively about the books, and explaining why doesn't seem a requirement. Perhaps they share the stigma of not being straight Marvel Superheroes. I enjoy them both albeit without the permission of those in the know. The latest experiment by Larry Hama in **G.I. Joe #21** would have met raves if it had appeared in any other title and **Dazzler #31** had an excellent if somewhat cliched and maudlin installment to offer.

A-Team #1 is a great deal of fun even though I have never been able to watch the show. But then any book plotted, pencilled and colored by Marie Severin would have to be. If only brother John had been able to render the inks!

Mars #3 continues one of the most interesting series in comics. Drawing in an excellent cartoony style and telling a very complex and well-developed story, Mark Wheatley and Marc Hempel are producing one of the more compellingly personal stylizations in comics form. For those who enjoy science fiction, character development or simply a good yarn, this is one to catch. Oddly enough it's told entirely without captions.

Journey by William Loebs is a lot of fun as the master craftsman at the helm of this book tells one hell of a rip-roarin' yarn. Set in the days of the opening of the Northwest Territories this has a fascinating array of Indians, fur-trappers and the usual assortment of frontier nonsense.

Spirit #1 is finally here and in full color although on most of the stories in rather disappointing color (which they promise to improve with future issues). It doesn't really matter, when the master stylist begins to tell his bit nothing else is really noticed. Perhaps the greatest stylist to ever hit the comic book page, Eisner is here represented by the earliest work of his premier creation.

Star Trek #2—this time they're doing it up right. After two misses by Gold Key and Marvel Comics, DC is finally preparing new stories of our favorite television characters as they were meant to be. While some of the visualizations need improvement, the storyline does not. Character bits such as Sulu longing for a promotion or "Bones's" reaction to Spock's death are very well handled and the story itself works well both falling within the proper confines of the Star Trek Universe and adding something new and of interest. I hope that they can keep it up.

Doctor Strange Classics #1 and **Elektra #2** are two excellent reprint books. These are the types of work that do deserve to be reproduced on fine paper, albeit for different reasons. Steve Ditko shines in this format in a way that his work has never been allowed to do before and one is immediately struck with the reality that his early work on the Master of the Mystic Arts far surpasses anything that has been done since. Frank Miller's saga of Elektra is of interest as there is a small amount of connecting material but more importantly the storyline runs unimpaired by the diversion of Daredevil's more mundane superheroics which originally filled most of the issues in which Elektra appeared in bits.

The Badger deserves passing comment. While it will not go down in the annals as one of the true masterpieces of our age, it is a good read. The personalities of the protagonists are interesting, the storyline is somewhat unique and the art is pleasing to the eye. The book is different enough from everything else in the market to be worth noticing and perhaps future issues will begin to pick up as both the talent and the promise are obvious. A worthy companion to the excellent **Nexus.**

WALT KELLY
SIMON & KIRBY
BILL EVERETT

AL CAPP
BASIL WOLVERTON
C.C. BECK

LOU FINE
MAC RABOY
WILL EISNER

COME TO YOU EVERY MONTH IN

The GOLDEN AGE of COMICS NMP

EACH MONTH YOU WILL DISCOVER A TROVE OF GOLDEN AGE TREASURES THE BEST STORIES FROM THE BEST DECADE OF COMICS PLUS INTERVIEWS, CHARACTER PROFILES, AND ARTICLES ON COLLECTING AND PRESERVING THE ORIGINAL GEMS

THESE STORIES APPEAR FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER ON CRISP, CLEAN WHITE PAPER EVEN BETTER THAN THEIR FIRST PRINTINGS ON NEWSPRINT (but, alas, sometimes with the minor ravages that time can wrought)

9 ISSUES
FOR $19.95

Send this coupon (or a facsimile) and your payment to:

NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.
1518 E. FOWLER AVE.
TAMPA, FL 33612

YES!! I WANT TO FIND A LITTLE GOLD IN MY MAIL BOX EACH MONTH... HERE IS MY HARD EARNED MONEY, PLEASE, PLEASE BEGIN MY SUBSCRIPTION WITH THE NEXT AVAILABLE ISSUE.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____